

'BUT IN OUR LIVES'

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'BUT IN OUR LIVES'

A Romance of the Indian Frontier

BY

SIR FRANCIS YOUNGHUSBAND

*"That we shew forth thy praise, not only with
our lips, but in our lives; by giving up our-
selves to thy service, and by walking before
thee in holiness and righteousness all our days."*

*Book of Common Prayer,
Thanksgiving.*

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IN GLORIOUS MEMORY
OF
MAJOR AVERELL DANIELL
WHO WAS KILLED IN ACTION
ON THE NORTHERN FRONTIER OF INDIA
1893
AND WHO, BY HIS DARING INITIATIVE
AND NOBLE SACRIFICE, SECURED
A LASTING PEACE

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“BUT IN OUR LIVES”

CHAPTER I

CHILDHOOD

IT is some years now since I read the Burial Service at the graveside of Evan Lee in the deep recesses of the Himalaya, far, indeed, from his own native land, and far even from the ways of his countrymen in India. He was only a Captain and known to few: he was no outstanding figure. And his brief life may seem but a puff—evident for a short moment and then disappearing into oblivion, of no concern or interest to a single person save to a few surviving relatives, and to many of them only as a shadowy remembrance.

But even a man who has taken little care of his life and allowed it to flow easily and comfortably along, with scarce a thought about it, would not like to think it had been lived altogether to no purpose. And Evan Lee was not of those who take no pride in their lives: he had tended his with peculiar care. And in risking it so deliberately in his country's service he must have longed that when he lost it, his life should not have been given in vain. He must have longed that all he really was and stood for should go on working in the hearts of men for years after his poor body had been committed to the grave. Indeed, I know he did. His most earnest prayer was that, just as he had received inspiration from those

who had lived before and around him, so he, in his turn, might give an impulse to those who followed after. And the time and opportunity are now come when we can help to fulfil his prayer.

Those of us who were with him in India knew that behind his imperturbable exterior were hidden fires somewhere burning. But it was not until quite recently, when certain old diaries and correspondence came into my hands, that I became aware of the true inner history of the man. And then I saw at once that it was a clear duty that his story should be told. But it is not as a matter of duty that I tell my friend and comrade's story. It is for me a pure delight to recall the old days together and the glorious scenes in which they passed. If not a single man or woman ever read this book I would not regret the labour on it.

It was in this wise that I came by the papers which have enabled me to write this story. Two years ago I, for the first time, met Evan Lee's sister. I had corresponded with Miss Lee at the time of his death, but soon after that came the Great War and I missed my chance of seeing her. I knew she was almost religiously devoted to him and he to her; and I was thankful for the opportunity of talking about him.

"He was a very dear brother to me," said Miss Lee. "We were devoted to each other, and though he used to make light of things and never speak of what were really his ambitions, and often even to me pretend he had not any, yet he did tell me a great deal, and knowing him so well I could guess much of what he dared not say in words. Then in his letters he would sometimes say things he did not care to speak about. And when his dear belongings were sent back to us from India, we found a kind of diary in which from time to time he wrote down—mainly with the object of making his ideas clear in his"

own mind—all his inmost thoughts. So now we know what his aims were, and—for England—they were simply boundless.”

All this interested me intensely, for I had often suspected there was some consuming ambition burning in the hidden depths of Evan Lee. But he never spoke it to us, and we could only draw our own conclusions from what he could not help our seeing. I would have liked to ask Miss Lee many questions, but an afternoon call is not the occasion for so delicate a matter as probing into the recesses of a man’s soul, even if that man has long since passed away. So I just let Miss Lee speak as she cared to.

The upshot of this conversation was that a few weeks afterwards I received this letter:—

“DEAR COLONEL BARKLEY,

Ever since our conversation I have had only one thought in my mind, and I am going to ask of you a very great favour. I want you to write the story of my brother’s life. You will say that writing books is not in your line; but this book I know you *could* write. For you knew him so well, you surely could not find the writing about him beyond you. I will give you all the materials I have and gladly answer any questions. So for *his* sake—to let the full be made of that precious life he so gladly gave—I do beg of you to do this for me.

Trusting completely in you,

Believe me,

Yours very truly,

MAUD LEE.”

How could I refuse so touching an invitation? I was well enough aware of my own limitations; still I felt it as a kind of sacred duty laid upon me, and I was bound to do my best. So on the con-

dition that she would freely help me with her counsel I accepted the honour I knew it was to have this set upon me, and I now embark upon my task.

But I must make a condition with my readers also. I must have them understand that I mean to show Evan Lee at his best. Some writers imagine that the more they dwell on the worse side of human nature the more truly are they showing what life really is. They are called realists. I am not of their number. Not the worst, but the best is the most real in life. In devoting their attention to the bad they lose sight of what really matters. What they present is not a true, but a false view. The essential nature of the man is what we judge him by. And in depicting Evan Lee I mean to show that. He had, of course, the side of him which the valet sees and which living in day to day contact with him I saw. He was not immaculate and never pretended that he was. He did, indeed, accuse himself of sins which he would call nothing else than pitch black, and would not allow even of any shade of grey. And they were anguish to him. But if I were to take the most accurate full-plate photograph of this side of him it would be no true picture of him. It would be positively misleading. And what I shall try and present will be that side of him—or rather that inner core of him—which he spent his whole life in developing. And this, I say, is the real man.

One other observation. Some may think that I have made a mistake at the very start by beginning at the end—by beginning with Evan Lee's death. But that death I do not consider the end. It was only a new beginning and a beginning of perhaps something greater far than ever resulted in his lifetime. The deep impress he made on his fellows is still working in them. Witness its effect upon his sister. And in my own case I remember how at a critical moment in the Great War his words and his

deeds, and the whole spirit of the man, directly influenced my own actions. If he had not said and done as he had I doubt whether I should have acted as I did. His spirit at that moment, was most vividly working in me. So I do not call his death the end of his life, and there is no harm therefore in commencing the story of it there. And if I were to start the story in what is ordinarily called the beginning of a man's life would that really be the beginning? I might say that he was born on a certain day in a certain year. But is his birthday really the first of a man? Long before that particular date is there not ever so much that goes to the making of him? He does not suddenly appear like a bolt from the blue. All kinds of influences have had their part in the producing of him, and these go back and back for an indefinite period into the past, just as the results of his life go on working for an indefinite period into the future. To start with, there is the love of his parents for one another. This was the immediate and direct cause of his coming into the world at all. Then there was the love of his mother's parents for one another, and of his father's parents for one another, and so on back and back and in ever-widening circles of love, till we find that nothing short of the whole Universe and nothing less than all time contributed to the making of him; and if I set relentlessly out to find the beginning I should after all discover that there was none.

However, a story has to make a commencement somewhere, even if there is, in fact, no true beginning either of a man or of the universe, or as far as that goes of a story. So I will make a fresh start with mine at the moment in time which is, for convenience' sake, styled June 30th, 1871, and at the point in space which, equally for our convenience, is named Newford, and is situate in the county of Devon. Here in the summer, in the sweetest part of the

sweetest country in the world, Evan Lee was born. He opened his eyes on the West of England.

His sister had preceded him by three years, and a brother was to follow him in another three years; but he was the first boy, and on him the fondest love was lavished. I have noted how it is from the love of a man and woman for one another that a man comes into the world. And Evan Lee owed his appearance to a love of the most exquisite kind. The love of his father and mother for each other, though undemonstrative, was exceedingly intense. It constantly glowed within them as a kind of liquid furnace. It was never referred to, and no outward display of it was ever made in the presence of others. Yet in the tone of the voice, in an emphasis, in a glance or expression its existence was distinctly revealed. So, at any rate, I was told by Miss Lee; for to arrive at what were the vitally formative influences which went to the making of Evan Lee, I had to question his sister persistently and closely. Until I understood what they were I could not draw a true picture of him.

Devotion to each other was, then, the main characteristic of Evan Lee's parents, and where he was born and brought up was, as I have said, the typically West-country village of Newford. There must be scores of prettiest villages in England. For each pretty village seems the prettiest of all. And Newford if it would not actually take first prize in the eyes of an impartial judge would certainly be "honourably mentioned." It stands partly on the backbone of a ridge and partly down its slopes. And it lies at the junction of the Tone and Purly rivers. It is presided over by a beautiful little old church with a square tower. And this and all the houses are built of a grey stone, which weathers into a yellow tint so that they seem to merge into the ample foliage of the trees and harmonise most

perfectly with the greenery. Along the hill-side were rich beech woods carpeted in the spring with primroses and violets and anemones, and with sheets of bluebells in the early summer. And the rich meadows by the rivers were always succulently green except in May, when the yellows of the buttercups and cowslips almost prevailed against it. The air was not as bracing as in the north and east of England: it had the softness of the West. On the other hand, there was seldom any extreme cold or extreme heat and the climate was excellent for children.

Here Evan grew up, living with an aunt while his parents were away in China, and the first photographs of him show him to be an eager laughing little fellow with a bright inquisitive look. Almost his earliest recollection was of his delight in finding violets in the woods and his admiration of the anemones. But he remembered, too, the awe he felt at some thunderstorm. He was terrified, he knew, but there was something wonderful in it, too, which he could not help enjoying. And he was deeply impressed when some servant told him the thunder was the voice of God.

But God he thought must be a terrible person, for he was always being told about God in church and at the Sunday-school. He lived up in the skies and spoke in this angry way like in the thunder and an angel near Him kept a book in which were written down all the naughty things he did. And some day he would have to appear before God and the account of all these naughty things would be read out and God would speak with the angry thunder voice and order him to be sent to hell, and there he would be burnt for ever and ever. And God was watching him all the time. He could not see God, but God could see him. He must be very careful not to do anything wrong or it would be seen and recorded against him.

The question for little Evan was what was wrong. Was eating blackberries wrong? Eating unripe blackberries, of course, was wrong. But when they were very *nearly* ripe was it wrong to eat them then? Again, if he ate blackberries when he was told not to he received a good sound smacking from his stern aunt. Would his naughtiness also be recorded against him by the angel and he be punished again, or was the smacking enough? Anyhow he did try his hardest, poor little thing, to be good, only he found it very, very hard while being naughty was so very, very easy and so very, very pleasant.

And he was not a bad little boy, even though he did eat unripe blackberries. He had great ideas on manliness. Like many another English boy he stoutly resisted attempts to cut his hair because he thought that if it were cut he would, like Samson, lose his strength. And he would never give in, however long a walk he was taken. Once when only seven years old he was taken for a walk of seven miles over the hills. All his life he remembered the exhaustion he felt dragging himself up the two last hills. But he stuck it out stoutly all the same.

And habits of hardihood were encouraged by his Spartan aunt. As the sister of an Admiral and the daughter of a General she had quite definite ideas on the subject of discipline. And she it was who administered the aforesaid smackings when blackberries were eaten. But she was also great-hearted. There was never a suspicion of anger or irritability in her punishings. They were executed with the best of feelings on both sides. And there was no question of her sparing the little leather strap which took the place of a rod as an instrument of justice, and spoiling Evan. The benefit of the doubt was always given in favour of the blackberries and not of the boy. It was better to assume that the blackberries he had been eating were thoroughly unripe and to

chastise him accordingly than to run the risk of his eating unripe fruit without being punished. On no account must he grow up with the habit of eating forbidden fruit, and so ending his days in hell fire.

But besides the blackberries and the pains they brought to him Evan bore all through his life a remembrance of the flowers of Newford. The discovery of a white violet in the wood or hedgerow and the smell of it was a joy he never forgot. Then, there was the delight of gathering great bunches of primroses, or of cowslips, bluebells, or buttercups. There was fascination in handling these in the mass—in gathering quantities and quantities of them, even if they were carelessly thrown away. The joy was in the gathering and possession. He could not have enough of their beauty. And the delicate little anemones he also admired; and later in the year the dainty harebells.

Garden flowers were never quite the same as real wild flowers. Wild flowers had to be hunted for and found. Garden flowers were there just outside the door for anyone to see and pick. Wild flowers were the real thing. Garden flowers rather artificial. Still garden flowers were beautiful too. Sweet Williams with their variety and mass of colour, wallflowers and pinks with their delicious smell, fuchsias with their graceful pendants, and the sweet little virginia stock were his prime favourites. But almost more than any he loved the convolvulus. It was a curious taste; but the flower's peculiar delicacy, the perfection of its form and the purity of its whiteness or richness of its purple were entrancing to Evan Lee. He would pour his little soul into the flower and long to be like it. And it was always a pain to him that it drooped so quickly and could not be brought indoors to be always by him.

Birds and animals do not at this stage seem to have attracted him so much as flowers. But one very

significant remembrance of this period he had in later days. The valley in which Newford lay was bounded in on one side by a ridge of hills ; and little Evan used perpetually to wonder what was on the other side. He was told one day that London was in that direction ; and he used to picture to himself marvellous cities and peoples on the far side and long to get up on the ridge to have a peep over.

c In these pains and delights and imaginings did Evan pass his childhood.

CHAPTER II

SCHOOLDAYS

THE story of a man's early life is apt to be dull reading. But I am afraid Evan's story must be told or he will never be properly understood. The boy is father of the man and we can only know Lee as a man if we know what he was like as a boy. So I must crave my readers' indulgence for a chapter or two more.

So far he had known nothing of his parents or his sister and brother; but when he was nearly eight a great change came in his life. Those mysterious beings, his father and mother, with his little brother, were to return from China where the Admiral had been serving, and he was to live with them instead of with his old aunt. Of his father he had no recollection whatever. And of his mother he had only the dimmest remembrance, somehow connected in his mind with sweets.

On the day of their expected arrival he was taken over to Exford where they were to stay, and he jumped up and down at the window eagerly awaiting the cab to appear from the station. At last it arrived and he rushed to the door as a beautiful lady stepped out and hurried to meet him and clasp him. He was shy at first and not very demonstrative; but as she hugged and kissed him he felt a tenderness he had never known before. Then his father, too, kissed and patted him tenderly. And his little brother of four was a new curiosity. Both then and for years this

brother, Henry, seemed more than he did to belong to his parents. Indeed, it took many years for Evan Lee thoroughly to feel that he belonged to his father and mother, for after about eighteen months in England they again went abroad. Still he was beginning to, and, ever since that first embrace, Evan had for his mother a tenderness which he felt for no one else. And he took immense pride in her : she was the most beautiful lady in the world. No other could compare with her. She was a long, long way off, in a different world from his, but she was very lovely and very gentle.

For a year a governess of repelling aspect loomed large in Evan's life. Then he was sent to a day school ; and very proud he was as he marched off the first day. Soon the master became to him a creature on an altogether higher level of being than any he had yet met. He seemed to know everything and to wield an authority Evan had never seen exercised before. His own father shrivelled into insignificance beside this tremendous being. And when Evan had learnt the Latin for a sheep and a horse and many other things, he used to return home in the afternoon filled with a growing sense of his own superiority. He felt in great awe of his father. But he was quite certain the little Admiral did not know the Latin for a sheep or a horse or scores of other things which Evan knew. And he secretly thought himself superior in consequence. Education does unfortunately have this result. When a boy is threatened with dire punishment if he does not learn certain things, and is made much of when he does learn them, he supposes that these things must be of transcendent importance in life. And when after great stress and pain he knows these things and then discovers that those about him do not know them he naturally jumps to the conclusion that he is a cut or two above them.

Every Sunday his mother would give him a little

religious instruction. Most of it he forgot ; but one incident he always remembered. His mother took him on her lap and showed him a picture she had painted. There was a beautiful palace in the distance on a hill, and in the foreground, all bordered with lovely flowers, was a path which seemed to lead to the palace. But then his mother pointed out that the path, though it seemed at first to be making for the palace, really led to a dreadful precipice at the side of the picture, and that the true way to the palace was up a very steep and rocky path away on the other side. And Lee was warned that in life he must avoid the comfortable and easy way, and look out for the difficult and dangerous. The one would look easy at first, but would lead to destruction. The other would be difficult at first, but would lead to happiness in the long run. The moral did not have much effect on Lee. But what did impress him for the first time and very deeply was his mother's earnest wish that he should be good. He could feel her wishing this intensely. And this intensity and the devoutness of his parents at prayers morning and evening and in church twice every Sunday implanted a deep impress on his little soul the effect of which lasted through his life.

But he was with his parents only a year and a half before they left again—this time for the East India Station. He had been given presents on the day they left, and he was feeling very cheerful in consequence, and was rebuked by a servant for being so light-hearted when his papa and mamma were leaving that very day. But their departure caused no great distress to Evan. He recollected afterwards a sudden kind of anguish which his mother showed at the last moment. But his thoughts were mostly of his presents and of the new school he was going to—this time as a boarder—and he could not realise that they would be away for four years more.

At this new school he spent a couple of years, and then went to the Junior School at Rugchester. He was now at a public school, and full of importance. His parents were dim figures again from whom he received letters regularly and to whom he wrote at irregular intervals and with great pain and effort. It was the school which now filled his life. The lessons had to be got through under strong compulsion; but the boys and the games and the books in the House Library absorbed his attention and were his life.

The great event of the first term was the School Races. He watched the big boys of the Upper School with glowing admiration. Wonderful beings they were, and he noted their every turn and movement. He glued his attention on them and tried to imitate their mannerisms. Then came the Junior School races. He entered for the Quarter Mile, and ran as hard as he could go. Other boys had got away in front and it seemed impossible that he should ever catch them up; and the way seemed very far to go at such a pace. But to his surprise one boy after another fell away behind him; and when he was getting very near the winning post there was only one boy left. A tremendous shouting went up as he got nearer and nearer. "Go it, little 'un. Go it, little 'un." they shouted. He tried as hard as ever he could. He strained and strained. And just before he reached the tape the last boy fell behind too; and there he was—the winner! He could hardly believe it. And what was more wonderful still those great boys who had been winning the big races came up to him and patted him on the back, and said "Well run." And when the prize-giving came and he went up to get his cup there was great cheering and clapping, and he felt full of pride.

Then followed the Easter holidays spent with Mr. and Mrs. Merton, friends of his parents, at a

beautiful old house at Florey in Devonshire. Dear old Mrs. Merton was a true spoiler of children. Admiral Lee had been kind to her midshipman boy out in China, and she meant to give Evan a splendid time these holidays. There was a pony to ride and a great park to roam about in, and quantities of Devonshire cream and home-grown honey and delicious puddings to eat. And everything was done to make Evan happy.

The house had windows down to the ground, and they opened on to a garden full of flowers. And stretching up from the garden was a trough-like turfy valley bounded by woods on each side. In this valley Evan could ride to his heart's content. Then he could wander in the woods and on to the moor and hunt for birds' nests. Round the house he had found thrushes' and blackbirds' nests, and now in the woods he climbed the trees to a pigeon's nest, and in the gorse on the moor found the most fascinating little long-tailed titmouse's nest. Then in the evening he would see myriads of rabbits running in and out of their holes. Perfect joy this was. Anything so glorious he had never imagined. And often afterwards he wished that the dear kindly old lady knew how happy she had made him.

School after this was dull indeed, and there was a horrid ache in Evan's heart as he returned to Rugchester. But school has its alleviations, and as the cricket season came into full swing the delights of bird-nesting were easily exchanged for the joys of cricket and of lying on a rug watching some great school game with all the thrills and catchings at the heart as the game developed well or ill for Rugchester.

But football was more Evan's game than cricket : his running powers came in better ; and he liked the quickness and the energy. He played for his house against Thomson's for cock-house ; and in the match one awful moment occurred. The game was going

hard against his house. The possibility of defeat became very near. His heart fell down within him. He would not be seen walking in the street with a boy in Thomson's House ; and to think of Thomson's coming out cock-house was something too frightful to endure. For a single instant this dreadful fear froze through him. And then the ball came to him. He seized it and made a desperate run. Others followed up. Defeat was averted. And eventually victory was won. Then life again was endurable ; and he could look a Thomson's boy in the face and show his contempt as before.

So the terms went by. The school lessons were got through as a matter of routine and under strong compulsion. Like the other boys he would arrive in the class-room at the last moment before the clock struck : and they would stampede out together at the instant the class was over. Games were the all-absorbing interest and lessons meant but little. Nevertheless, he somehow or other managed to progress up the different forms, and when he was fifteen he was transferred to the Upper School to White's House. So now he felt himself almost among men, for sitting at meals in the same room were tremendous heroes of football, cricket, and running.

The Easter holidays followed, and this year he spent them with his aunt at Newford. And now came to Lee the first stirrings of the manhood in him. On a visit to a near neighbour of his aunt's was a beautiful girl of sixteen. Her name was Rose Mainwaring. And she had the purest blue eyes and the most glorious hair and the sweetest smile any human being ever had. Lee would only admire her from a distance at first : anyone so lovely must be far beyond him. Then he and an older boy gathered courage to talk to her together. But even thus supported Lee would not say much ; he would only watch her closely and listen to every word she uttered

and think her voice sweeter even than her looks. She was little short of an angel, he thought, and would never think of him. But all day long he thought of her and he dreamed of her at night. Then he went back to school and she went back to school. They never met again ; and the vision slowly vanished. But like the impression of the primroses and violets this vision of a lovely English girl remained embedded in him, and was, we may be sure, a sweetening influence in his life.

Real home life was also now to begin. The Admiral retired from the service and settled at Ryde, in the Isle of Wight, where he hoped to keep to some extent in touch with his old friends in the Navy, and especially with his lifelong friend, Admiral Bowen. And now at last Evan Lee had a settled home ; and henceforward the home feeling grew stronger and stronger. It was not to be for some years yet that he and his parents were fully to know one another ; for both he and they were reserved. He had grown up apart from them ; and it took long for them to find their way into each other's hearts. But with his sister it was different ; they naturally drew together more quickly. They became intensely devoted to one another. And it was through her that he and his mother were eventually brought so tenderly together.

Being in England now for good Mrs. Lee put her whole soul into making up a home. She tried to find good friends for Evan. She arranged tennis parties, boating expeditions and drives in the island. She taught Miss Lee music and singing. And in the evenings she would play or practice popular English songs for all to join in or get Evan to read a Dickens or some other good novel aloud. She was most scrupulous, too, in her housekeeping. The home was always in beautiful order, clean and tidy. And strict punctuality was the rule, for the Admiral was very particular. Headaches she must often have suffered

from, and often she must have felt weary and worried, but she never showed it or spoke about it. For those in the home she was always bright : now she had a home she meant to make it perfect.

Every day the Admiral used to go to the Yacht Club, every day he went to see Admiral Bowen, and every day he took a walk. He liked good food ; he drank everything except water ; he smoked most of the day ; and he enjoyed meeting his friends. But he spoke little in his home ; and at first his children were somewhat afraid of him till they gradually discovered the warmth of his heart and found he was really only longing for their love.

With his parents Lee now had to talk over his future. He had at one time had a longing to enter the Navy. He had read *Masterman Ready* and other sea story books for boys, and he thought how glorious a sea life would be. But his father had instantly vetoed this. The Admiral's father had been in the Army, and Evan must go into it too. And now Evan wished for nothing else. He got hold of a copy of Napier's *Peninsular War*, and was thrilled with the description of the battles. He also read a *Life of the Duke of Wellington*, and looked upon him as a hero second only to Nelson. All his ideas now centred on a military life ; and when back at school he settled to work with a seriousness there had not been before. And this new seriousness was due not only to the realisation that he would have to work hard if he wished to get into the Army : a deep religious sentiment was also growing in him. The home atmosphere was religious. And at school the Head Master's earnestness in religion made a deep impression, and the sacred concerts on the Sunday evening when Evan could join in with the rest of the school in singing the great choruses of some Oratorio or some well-known hymns had an even greater influence upon him. An infinite yearning filled him. He felt he had

it in him to do something great. What it would be he could not say. But the conviction was there, and it never left him.

He was encouraged in this by his friendship with a boy named Truman, who was a year older than himself and a remarkable boy. The two never spoke to each other about religion. But they liked to go together to these organ recitals and sacred concerts, and from what they both admired they knew how each felt. Truman was of an exceeding refinement of nature—very musical, very poetical, very thoughtful, and highly sensitive to beauty of all kind. He seemed to be able to do anything; and everything came easily to him. He would write a poem or make music or sing as naturally and easily as a bird. Lee felt heavy and thick beside him, and greatly envious of him. Yet with all this real genius he had no airs or affectations whatever. He was as simple and unselfconscious as a child. Most of the boys looked down upon him because he was not much good at games. But Lee felt a kind of adoration for him as for some one very rare and precious. He seemed to Lee to be on an altogether higher level than the other boys, and he was prouder of his friendship than of anything else at school. He wanted some personality on whom to centre his devotion to whatever is highest in life and he chose Truman for his hero.

And Truman was not reserved and reticent like Lee. He had the courage to be himself and refused to be beaten into a mould like every other boy; and he was a very joyous boy, full of enthusiasms, expansive and expressive. He had not the physique to be good at games, but he applauded so enthusiastically and had such a way of expressing his keenness before a game and his appreciation afterwards of any success that he had a most inspiring effect on other boys. Probably it was because he lived in London, and

was constantly meeting many different kinds of people, and because his mother was a woman of great charm and social talent that he had this power of expression. Certainly it was a delightful gift, for the boy had in him what was really worth expressing.

His living in London gave him this advantage, also, that he was able to hear much and good music, both in his home and at the opera and concerts, for his mother greatly encouraged his musical disposition. And being a very pure-minded boy—almost holy one might call him—sacred music made a great appeal to him. He loved Bach and Handel and Beethoven, and in our own day Cæsar Franck and Elgar. These matched his own white soul, and he could give himself wholly to them. Lee had so far thought music was something effeminate—good enough for girls, but not suitable for boys. But now music began to have a marked effect upon him. He loved joining in the hymns in chapel and in the choruses in the Sunday evening concerts. Most of all he loved to hear Truman's voice as he sang the solo of an oratorio. And as Truman was allowed to play the organ by himself a real joy to Lee was to get into the chapel quietly and listen to him. Some great satisfaction for his soul he got that way ; and this satisfaction he treasured very dearly.

And Truman was as devoted to books as he was to music : he was an insatiable reader. The other boys called him a “ swot,” and he was too sensitive not to have felt the contempt with which they looked upon this incessant reading. But if Truman was a “ swot,” he was not so careless in his dress as many bookworms are. He was neat and clean, and his tidiness formed a striking contrast to the slovenliness of most boys—and masters, too. He was an artist to his finger-tips—in his dress as in everything else. And as to reading, he simply had to. There was a hungering in him for what books contained, and he

could no more have gone without them than he could go without his dinner. Works of imagination, poetry, and novels, were what he chiefly liked. And fiction was not much in Lee's line at this stage. Lee wanted what he called the real thing—real lives of real men, not mere pretence lives. And he had bought a second-hand copy of the despatches of the Duke of Wellington, which he manfully struggled through as they described great events which had really happened. But this difference in their taste for books did not lessen the admiration of the one boy for the other. They were linked together by a common devotion to something deeper down. And Truman's love for works of imagination told on Lee in the end, for later in life he became devoted to poetry, and also discovered that in a novel there is often more real life than in a biography.

Besides his friendship for Truman another circumstance which occurred about this time contributed to the deepening of Lee's religious feelings. This was his confirmation, for which he was prepared during the holidays by the Vicar. A little book of preparation was given him, and he used to visit the Vicar once a week to be privately instructed in it. Neither the Vicar's instruction nor the book made much impression on him. He took it all on trust as he had to take so much on trust at school. But there seemed to be a lack of sincerity both in the Vicar and in the book. The questions propounded in it did not seem to be important or to have much relation to real life ; and the answers given to them were not convincing. This part of the confirmation had, if anything, rather a chilling effect on Lee. But the confirmation itself did most deeply impress him, and it had a lasting influence on his life.

He felt then as he had never felt before the intensity of the longing everyone had that he should lead a pure and good life. His mother's and his sister's

earnestness he especially felt. And in the prayers and hymns and the Bishop's address he felt this same great craving that he should be worthy. Carried away in the fervour of the moment he threw out his whole soul to God. He prayed most fervently that he might live up to the high expectations his dear ones had of him. And he determined with all that power he put into winning a race that he would lead a good and pure and worthy life. He felt in a strangely exalted mood as the service progressed, though he said nothing of this to his family or to anyone else. The utmost he ever said on the subject was in a letter to his mother on his return to school. She had written earnestly hoping that he would always keep a high standard before him. And he replied that "in quietness and in confidence would be his strength." A reticence on the deeper things of life was habitual with him—and with his family.

And he had now to apply himself to an urgent practical matter—the passing of the examination for the Army. There was keen open competition, and he had to win his way by his own exertions. He was sent up the first time more with the idea of accustoming him to being examined than with any expectation that he would pass. And he did, indeed, need this acclimatisation, for the examination was held in London where he had never been before, and his mind was utterly distracted. He failed of course. He went up six months later, and again he failed—this time principally because he had to play football for the house and sometimes for the school, and he was too run down to work properly as well.

Now matters were getting serious. He was working hard, and his failures were due to no slackness in that respect. But it was a heavy, dull mechanical grind. He could never put his heart into this work for the examination as he did into races and football or into reading military history and biography or

listening to music. He had to get through the examination as he would have to get through any horrible morass which stood in the way of where he wanted to go. Work for the examination took away all his enjoyment of school life : it had only this advantage that it trained him in making efforts to gain what he wanted.

For the third time he went up and this time he succeeded. The relief was astonishing. He had not realised till it was off him what a burden that examination had been. Now he went about as light as a feather, erect, and himself once more. "My education is finished," he kept gleefully saying to himself. All the world seemed wide open before him ; and he began to think himself a man. The old Admiral was almost as relieved as Evan himself ; and from this time on he and Evan got to understand each other better than they ever had before. His mother beamed with joy, and his sister was full of pride. The whole home seemed to light up just as Evan himself did. And so his schoolboy days were ended.

CHAPTER III

SANDHURST

EXAMINATIONS had spoiled his school days, but his year at the Royal Military College was a time of pure enjoyment. Restrictions there were, of course, but he was treated more as a man than as a schoolboy. He wore uniform; he had much greater freedom; there was no nightmare of an examination perpetually haunting him; and the work to be done was after his own heart and a great deal of it in the open air, instead of in class-rooms. In place of the ordinary school curriculum he had to study military strategy and tactics, reconnaissance, surveying, fortification; and the instructors were officers who were experts in their subjects. Even the drill he enjoyed. He was being made a soldier and to be a soldier was his ambition. So he tried to make himself as erect and smart as the drill sergeants. One thing only he missed: there was none of that devotion to the Military College that there had been to his old school; and the instructors took none of that individual interest in the cadets that the masters had in each boy. When the College played a football or a cricket match against Woolwich there was only a mild enthusiasm about it. Whereas at Rugchester there was always the wildest excitement: tremendous elation or dreadful depression. When Rugchester was beaten by Harton Lee remembered the Eleven coming back as ashamed of themselves as if they had committed a crime, and the whole school being

filled with despondency as black as a London fog : if the end of the world had been announced, they could not have looked more glum.

This strong feeling for the school and of the school for him he did miss much ; otherwise the life was perfect. And he grew stronger and more healthy. There was plenty of open-air work ; and he took long walks over the country besides. Then came the sports, and he entered for the longest race—the three miles. He was still only seventeen, and he had men from the Universities up to twenty-three years of age to contend against. But he had won many races at school, and he thought he might anyhow have a try for one of the prizes. The result was the best race he had ever run or seen. The course was circular and exactly one quarter of a mile round. Consequently they had to run round it twelve times. After the first few rounds the field began to thin out and Lee found himself with about half a dozen others well ahead of the rest. One by one he passed all of these except the first, Arnold by name. Then round and round the course Arnold and he went—Arnold leading and he a couple of yards behind. Lee would not make his effort to pass till the last half of the last round. But as he kept doggedly on he questioned himself whether Arnold would then just sail away from him and leave him standing or whether, with what he felt he had still left in him, he would be able to overhaul and pass him. As he entered the straight for the last time he set his teeth and clinched himself together and put the whole of himself into the final spurt. He drew up alongside the leader. Arnold made a spasmodic attempt to retain his lead, and for a moment shook Lee off. But Lee put even more of himself into a supreme effort. He came up alongside and then drew clear ahead of his rival. And he won apparently with perfect ease.

A mighty shout went up, and the Governor of the College—an old General—came up to Lee and told him it was the finest race he had ever seen. And Lee himself was always specially proud of this race, for it was so beautifully run. He had not shown how exhausted he really was, and he gave the impression that he had had the leader all the time, and had given him the *coup de grâce* with exquisite art at the culminating moment. There was more art in this race than in any other he had run.

That summer was the happiest he had spent for a long time. Latterly at school he had been too serious. The zest of boyhood had been strained out of him by examinations ; and with work and games combined he had been physically exhausted. Now open-air life and congenial work had made a different lad of him. He went about holding himself very upright. He was much more particular about his dress, and looked with horror upon the school slovenliness. He was still thin, and the old Admiral used to say that he gave little return for the prodigious amount he used to eat. But he was hard and wiry, and there was a healthy glow on his cheek in place of that sallow unwholesome look he had had at school.

And everyone at home strove his and her best to make this last summer a jolly time. For next summer he would have to go to India, as the Admiral could not afford to keep him in a regiment in England, and he would have to go to India where the pay was higher. So every kind of entertainment was got up—sailing in the Solent, tennis parties, picnics, etc. And for a week Truman was able to come and stay with him. He had been head of the school, and had taken a big scholarship at Oxford, and in October would be going to the University. But now Lee felt much more on an equality with him. Indeed, he felt that he himself had almost come to man's estate. He was embarked on a definite career, while Truman

was still at the education stage, and did not yet know definitely what he would do.

"I would go into the Church," he said one day to Lee in a moment of extreme confidence, "for at bottom religion is what most interests me. And with all my devotion to music it is the religion that inspires it that I most like. But I'm rather independent and don't like binding myself down to creeds and articles. So I'm not going to make up my mind definitely yet. I shall see when I've been at Oxford for a time. I shall have to earn my living eventually, for I don't want to be always dependent on my people. They've been very good to me so far: still I want to make my own way in life. They expect me to do something very great; and I should not like to disappoint them."

Mrs. Lee highly approved of Truman; and being a musician herself she could appreciate his talent. She was delighted her boy should have such a friend: he was evidently one in many thousands.

And among the people at Ryde were a Mr. and Mrs. Denver whom the Admiral had met at Bombay. He was an Indian Civil Servant of ability, who was home now on a year's leave which he was spending in the Isle of Wight; and their children had been collected there for the summer holidays. They were a bright, cheery, cultivated family, and the Lees and Denvers had many tennis parties and picnics together.

But Lee's chief attraction this summer and till he went to India was an elderly lady—as he considered her though she was only twenty-six—who to his idolising mind had every attraction and virtue of womanhood. Like the school girl of a former period she was to be admired from a distance. She was of the angelic order—not to be approached except with becoming reverence. She had an entrancing smile and the most heavenly eyes and a bewitching wisp

of hair across her forehead. Everyone loved her, and she loved everyone. And every little excuse for going to see her Lee would seize. If a note of invitation to some picnic had to be sent he would volunteer to take it himself, so that his mother might get the answer sooner; and if she had to return by herself he would undertake to escort her home. According to Miss Lee the family saw through all these not very subtle devices, and in subsequent years used to chaff Lee much about them. But his devotion was very real. We may smile at it, but it was the instinctive love of love for love. The object of this youthful worship really had a genuine capacity for devoted love, and it was wholly to Lee's credit that he should discern this and admire it. Also it was good for his soul.

He went back to Sandhurst for his final term, and began to feel himself almost an officer. Football was now the chief attraction. As he had not been in the School Fifteen at Rugchester he was not at first chosen to play for the Military College in outside matches. But as at the last moment the half-back failed on one occasion Lee was asked to take his place. He determined to seize the opportunity to establish a claim to be in the fifteen. He kept on the outside of the scrimmage extremely alert and ready to seize the ball and be away with it instantly. Since leaving school he had developed a great turn of speed. He found he could out-distance most of his opponents. And as he was very quick and agile he could generally dodge those he could not out-pace. With these advantages he accomplished two fine strokes. Once when he had run right round all the rest and only the back remained to stop him he outwitted this back by making a sudden turn in his course, getting in behind him, crossing the goal-line and securing a try for his side. The second was a stroke of genius. Again he had run round all the

rest and only the back remained. But this time an inspiration seized him to try and kick a goal. It is a difficult thing to do when going at full speed. But he was within distance, and the temptation was great. He steadied himself for a second and then just before the back had time to seize him he took aim at the goal, dropped the ball and kicked it. It went straight and true midway between the goal-posts. A tremendous cheering went up. And Lee had done something which gave him pleasure for a lifetime. Like his three-mile race it was a triumph of art. There was combined in it speed, right judgment, swift decision, true aim, and deft accomplishment. It earned him his "cap." And he became henceforward one of the College fifteen.

At the end of the term came the passing out examinations. He passed out considerably higher than he had passed in and obtained honours. And so his year at Sandhurst closed. He had enjoyed it from start to finish. It would be unreasonable to suppose that he had not had his trials. Any full-blooded young man must have had his temptations in the free life cadets led at Sandhurst, and the lewd talk often heard must have added to them. But the home influence was now all-powerful with Lee. The temptations were great, but the shame he would have felt in yielding was greater still. Lee had, like the majority of cadets, led there a pure, healthy, manly life; and if he had not been so anxious to get to a regiment he would gladly have had another year there.

For the next few months, till his departure for India, home life became very, very tender. The coming parting was in the mind of all. Nothing much was said, but a special tenderness was in every word and deed. Home became to him more than it had ever been before. Little of it he had known, for his parents had been away from England the greater part of his life, and of the time they had been in

England the greater part he had spent at school or at Sandhurst. So its sweetness was concentrated into these few months; and all felt they must make the most of him; while on his part he felt he must sip the sweetness to its last drop.

In the spring the gazette appeared. He was gazetted Lieutenant in the 1st Battalion of the Devonshire Light Infantry stationed at Jhanpur in India. It was a regiment of the good old English type—one of those which always do well on active service and are popular wherever they are quartered, but who are not written up in the press as they do not wear kilts, and who are not spoken of as smart because they do not attract the sons of millionaires. Lee had often read of the regiment in his military studies, and he was as proud as a peacock when he had got his uniform and been photographed in it to the joy of the family—not excluding the Admiral.

Life for Lee became now very tense. He was excited at the thought of actually being an officer, and at having to go to India. But he was feeling, too, most poignantly the coming loss of all about him. And as the time for parting more nearly approached he would often quiver with sadness. It was too agonising to think of leaving those who were now becoming dearer to him every day. He might, indeed, have remained in England a couple of months longer by joining the depot and sailing for India after the hot weather was over, but he was so keen upon getting down to real work with his regiment, and being able to feel he actually and not merely on paper belonged to it, that when he was given the choice he decided upon going straight out to India, even though it did mean landing there in the hot weather.

A great show of cheerfulness was kept up in the home; but as the day of leaving approached there came a fearful drag within him and a great sinking

of the heart. On the last evening his father, as he smoked his pipe in the study after dinner, began to talk very earnestly to Evan. He was not given to offering advice to his son : he preferred that his son should learn for himself. But this occasion was exceptional. His dear boy was to launch out into life without any of the old stays and props. Now he would be dependent on himself alone. All would be new and strange. He would be among men none of whom he had known before, and all of whom would be older than himself. He would encounter many temptations and experience many discouragements. And there would be by him none who would befriend him—none, that is, who had known and cared for him. So the old Admiral wanted to give his boy just one sound plain piece of advice such as would really sink home into his heart and be something he would retain and act upon. He knew it was of no use enunciating pious platitudes. His boy was a good boy and an earnest and sincere boy. The ordinary platitudes he was well enough aware of already. And whatever did not ring absolutely true and whatever could not be brought into actual practice would be wasted on him. The boy would silently throw it from him. It would never go down into him and fructify.

Of all this the Admiral was fully conscious. So after talking of ordinary things for a while he said in a tone which Evan knew meant something coming straight from the heart : “ Before you leave us there is one piece of advice I want to give you, Evan, and I want it to last you all your life. It is this. Whatever you have to do make the best of it. Do it with your might. If you are told to do a thing, do it. Don’t raise difficulties. Do it to your best.”

Lee promised his father he would ; and often in after years he remembered this parting advice, which he knew came from his father’s heart, and

which he knew, too, was what his father had himself acted on in his own life. Lee did *try* to do things to perfection. That anyhow was his aim—to make the *best* of things : and to *make* the best, not expect it to come without effort. He did not meekly put up with things as he found them : he actively sought the best and made the best of it. This became his guiding principle in life, and it sprang directly from his old father's advice.

CHAPTER IV

DEPARTURE FOR INDIA

TIME presses relentlessly on, sweeping us ever with it in its almighty course. And whether we dread or wish for a coming event we cannot by one iota hasten or retard the inevitable passage of time, though often when the event is over it seems as if time had rushed forward with ever-increasing speed as the climax was approached. So, at all events, it appeared to Evan. Before he could realize it, the last morning had arrived, and the moment for saying "Good-bye" had come.

His mother dared not venture further than the hall; and there seizing Evan in a final clutch she held him to her with an intensity of strength he had never suspected she possessed. Always so reserved and so quiet and tender he could not have believed she loved him with such overwhelming power. Gone now were all her cheery smiles. Her eyes were streaming with tears. She clasped him as if she could never let him go. Then with one supreme effort she loosened her hold and brushed aside her tears: she was determined to send her precious boy away with a smile upon her face: his last recollection of her must be a bright one.

More tearful, desperate Good-byes followed with his sister and brother at the door, for only the old Admiral was to accompany him to the station. Up to the time the train started he talked to his son with apparent composure and in the usual matter-of-fact

way. But, again to Evan's astonishment, when it came to the actual moment of saying " Good-bye " there was his dear old father with tears coursing down his face and in an agony of effort to keep them back.

All had done their best to be brave and cheerful ; but there was the fact that Evan was going away for at least three or four years, and the wrench at the heartstrings was more than any could bear. And when Evan was by himself on the steamer with only strangers round him he acutely realised his position. He was leaving all familiar connections and the dear shelter of home, and was now on his way to make a career in a far country in a depressing climate and amidst perfect strangers. He knew no one in the regiment he was to join. He knew no one in the station in which it was quartered. In that whole vast country there were scarcely half a dozen people he had ever seen before, and only the Denvers whom he knew well, through their having been at Ryde. By himself he would have to make his way ; and he was only nineteen. It was a big adventure, and needed a brave heart to make it.

There were only four passengers on the *Shirley Hall*, and Lee had much time to himself. He started from Liverpool and took twenty-four days to reach Bombay. The first day out was a Sunday. There being no service he read it over to himself in the cabin at the time when they at home would be in church and praying for him. The rest of the day he spent by himself, pacing the deck a great deal of the time, buffeting against the wind and watching the great seas. Those last weeks, and especially the last morning, had been a revelation to him. He had no idea he was loved so much by those at home. And he had no idea that he loved them so dearly. Now he had left it he appreciated his home as he had never done before. Each one in a different way was inexpressibly precious to him now. And the deep

religious feeling at the bottom of the home life became intenser still. The parting had been terrible, but he made stern resolutions that he would keep up the warm home feeling and act up to the high standard there expected of him, and that he knew his dear ones were praying, oh ! so earnestly, that he should reach. One verse of a hymn kept recurring to him ; and he knew his mother and his sister must be thinking of it too.

“ And then for those, our dearest and our best,
By this prevailing Presence we appeal ;
O fold them closer to Thy mercy's breast,
O do Thine utmost for their soul's true weal ;
From tainting mischief keep them white and clear,
And crown Thy gifts with strength to persevere.”

He could feel the tremendous intensity with which they would be yearning that his soul might be kept white and clear. And he prayed that he might fulfil their desires. But what constantly vexed him during the voyage was the fear that the temptations and distractions of regimental life would make the practice of religion hard, and that time and his strange surroundings would wear away the impressions of home and make him think less of his dear ones and grow cold to them.

Lives of great men he now read to keep up his courage and determination. But a *Life of Christ* which had been given him had little influence upon him. As long as Christ was to be taken as entirely Divine, as already perfect and wholly incapable of sin, He could never be for Lee a practical guide in life. As well might a poor unarmoured peasant be asked to follow a fully caparisoned knight into battle. Against the knight arrows would glance off harmlessly, leaving him unscathed. Into the poor peasant's body every arrow would pierce its way. Young Lee, therefore, in actual practice looked more to human

heroes as his guides in life and took them for his example.

In these very earnest musings did he pass the voyage, and as it progressed he seemed to feel the parting more. He missed someone to talk to of home. All was so lonely for him. A soldier's life was a hard one, he thought, if it meant these terrible partings. Yet not for one moment did he regret having adopted the army for his profession ; and he knew that once he was at work his natural temperament would assert itself and he would again become cheerful.

CHAPTER V

ARRIVAL IN INDIA

AT length the voyage was over, and the start had to be made. Dreamings had to be suppressed : resolutions put to the test. India which he had heard and read so much about—India which was to be the scene of his life work—was there in front of him rising in grey mist-covered hills. The wind was blowing hard and the rain was falling in sheets. They were in the thick of the monsoon, and it was a depressing outlook—very different from the “shiny East” of which he had heard. But he was met on arrival by a messenger from an old friend of his father’s and taken to a beautiful house on Malabar Hill, and he began to be cheerful again. The comfort and luxury of it astonished Lee. The rooms seemed enormous after the ship’s saloons. A cool air kept blowing through them. Magnificently attired servants were standing or squatting about on every side. The garden was full of strange flowers and shrubs of variegated colours. There was a profusion of food and drink at meals. And Lee thought that anyhow some of the life in India was not so bad after all. Nor did it seem that the people would be difficult to get on with, for his host was as kind and thoughtful for him as if he had known him all his life.

But it was his regiment he wanted to get on to as quickly as he could. He anticipated a difficult time there ; but he wanted to make the plunge and be

at work. He could give no thought to anything else. He hardly even observed the country he passed through in the train. It was all very different from England, and he took it in the lump as strange. With his home behind and his regiment before he could give small attention to the country by the way. He only had a general impression of drenching rain, of steamy heat, of endless crowds, of noisy clamourings and shrill cries, of tumble-down houses, and of luxuriant greenery.

From the railway station at Jhanpur, Lee drove along roads of great width crossing each other at right angles, at this season bordered with luxuriant grass and drained by huge gutters wide and deep enough to carry off the heavy rainfall. Half hidden among trees on either side of the road were bungalows—plain, square, whitewashed mud buildings capped with gigantic thatched roofs enclosing deep verandahs in which cotton-clad servants and messengers hung about and punkah wallas pulled monotonously at the punkahs cooling the *sahibs* within. Each of these bungalows was set in a big, untidy, overgrown garden—or compound as it is called in India. And in most compounds was a well from which the water was drawn by bullocks plodding patiently round a Persian wheel, the creaking of which he was to have cause to remember on many a dreary day. Behind the bungalow were squalid servants' houses. And innumerable crows and green parrots cawed and chattered in the trees.

Up to one of the largest of these bungalows Lee was driven, and his long journey from England was over. The moment for which he had worked for years had arrived. His regimental life was to begin.

The climax was not on a par with the preparation. Seated in long cane chairs in a wide, long, high room, smoking cigars and cigarettes and reading newspapers, were half a dozen officers in khaki

uniform replete with breakfast and comfortably resting themselves after the early morning parade. To the nearest of these he announced with impressive dignity that his name was Lee, and that he had come to join the regiment. The announcement was received with a cordiality that surprised Lee.

"You're a ripper. There will be one more for leave now."

Lee did not understand.

"You see your coming out like this in the hot weather gives one more fellow with the regiment, so one more can go on leave. You're keen on soldiering, aren't you? The Colonel tells us he has had a letter about you, saying you are."

"Well, I wanted to get out to the regiment as quick as I could. There was no use in stopping at home."

"That's good for us anyhow. Now what you must do is to go down to the orderly room and report yourself. The Colonel and the Adjutant will be still there. You can take my pony. The syce will show you the way."

"Oughtn't I to be in uniform?"

"You can't wear cloth uniform at this time of year, and you won't have your khaki yet. So go as you are."

Lee accordingly went off to the orderly room, where he found a number of sergeants and corporals standing about in the verandah awaiting the orders for the day, and asked to see the Adjutant.

"What name, if you please?" asked the sergeant.

When Lee gave it and said he had come to join, the sergeant drew himself up and saluted, and said:

"Beg your pardon, Sir. I will tell the Adjutant."

Lee was full of pride at receiving his first salute in the regiment. The sergeant came out at once, saluting again, and asking him to come in. The Colonel, the Adjutant, and the Regimental Sergeant-

major were in the room. The Colonel, a tall, thin, erect, stern-looking man rose to shake hands with Lee and greeted him in the kindest manner.

“ I am glad you have come out like this in the hot weather. It shows you are keen. You will be able to get through your drills before the cold weather, and come on to regimental parade by then. Denman will put you up to anything, and you are to be in his bungalow. You need not stop here now, but come and see me in my bungalow about five this afternoon. Go back to the Mess and Denman will be there very soon.”

Lee left the room and the sergeants and corporals sprang to attention as he came out. He really did feel now that he belonged to the regiment. And he had taken to the Colonel: he was soldierly—that could be seen at once; and he was probably strict; but he was also kind and inclined to take an interest in Lee. And that was good for a beginning.

Denman, the Adjutant, Lee had also taken to. He was a big, tall, ruddy-faced, handsome man, with a look of the country gentleman about him. The two had a late breakfast together, and the others having gone they were able to talk in peace.

“ These bungalows are not much of it,” said Denman; “ but I’ve a fairly good one, as they go, just opposite the mess and not far from the lines, and if you like you can have half and share the rent. The rooms are big and we can each have a sitting-room, a bedroom, and a bathroom; and as we have our meals over here in mess that’s all we want. There are fairly good stables too. A crowd of servants has collected outside waiting for you. They know at once when a new officer is arriving and are on him like vultures. You’ll have to be careful whom you engage. You’ll want a bearer (valet), a *khidmutgar* (table servant), and two *punkah wallas*, and you can share my *bhisti* (water-carrier) and sweeper.

It's a nuisance being obliged to have so many servants, but out here one man will do only one thing. Your bearer won't wait on you at table, and your *khidmutgar* won't look after your uniform and clothes. If you like I'll help you choose your servants. All the scum of the Bazaar will be there, and each will have wonderful chits (certificates). But my bearer will tell us all about them."

Lee gratefully accepted the advice and help, and while Denman was talking took a deep impression of him. He seemed to Lee very much older than himself, though Denman was only twenty-eight. There was, in fact, all the difference that there is between a man and a boy. Lee was much offended when he heard people referring to him as boy: he considered himself very much a man now he had joined a regiment. Nevertheless he was very much a boy—indeed, he retained a certain boyishness all his life. On the other hand, Denman was very much a man.

When Lee and Denman arrived at the bungalow they found themselves assailed by a multitude of servants clamouring for employment and holding out their chits.

"Let me have a look at them," said Denman. "The way to choose one is to judge by the *sahibs* they have been with. Some men always have good servants: others always have bad. Let's look for a servant who has been some time with a good *sahib*; then we won't go far wrong. Indian regiments have better servants than British regiments. Look out for a servant who has been with some man in an Indian regiment. They know better than we do how to treat their servants."

A bearer and a *khidmutgar* were eventually chosen and a couple of coolies engaged to pull the punkah. Denman had already put a chair or two and a table in Lee's room, and in the evening they were to go out into the bazaar and purchase a bed, writing

table, chairs, wardrobe, and chest of drawers. Denman then left Lee with his servants unpacking his kit.

At five Lee went round to the Colonel. "I have had a letter from Sir John Hayman," said Colonel Bond, "asking me to look after you, and the best thing I could do was to get Denman to take you into his bungalow. Things will be strange to you at first, but he will help you along. And you will find the fellows in the regiment a good lot. You will have to work hard at your drills for the present, but you won't mind that."

"Certainly not, Sir. I have always wanted to be a soldier. And I want to get to work as soon as I can."

"Well, Denman will look after you there too. And I may as well tell you about him. He came to us from the ranks. Apparently he was brought up in the expectation of being amply provided for, and being able to lead the life of a country gentleman. But when it was too late to go up for the examination for the army the expectations failed to materialise. He went off to the Colonies somewhere to try and make a living, but lost what little money he had and returned to England and enlisted. He had always wanted to be a soldier, and now he was in the Army he worked so well that he soon was offered a commission and joined us; and seeing what a good man he was I made him adjutant. But it never rains but it pours. As soon as he was well on his feet he was left a fair sum of money, and is now well off. He had had a rough time of it, but he has come out top at last. I thought you would like to know this about him as you will be living together. And I have told him all about yourself, and I know you will get on well together."

Colonel Bond even in his own house was severe-looking, and he inspired Lee with much awe. But he quite evidently meant to keep a friendly eye on

Lee. And Lee was satisfied that he was a thorough soldier and a man whose approval it was worth while working for.

On his return to his bungalow, Denman drove Lee in his dog-cart into the bazaar to choose some furniture. And then they dressed and walked over to mess together. The dinner-table was loaded with magnificent silver plate, much of it very old and valuable. Behind each officer was his own *khidmutgar* dressed in white, but wearing a belt uniform with all the other servants and with the regimental badge in his turban. An English sergeant presided over the waiting, and in addition to the servants of individual officers there were a few general mess servants. The scene was brilliant, but the proceedings were dull. There were only nine officers present—this being the leave season—and one of these was the Colonel. And colonels, as a rule, have a chilling effect on the conversation of subalterns at the dinner-table. To a certain extent a mess dinner is a parade: the officers are in uniform, and the fact cannot be got over that the Colonel is the Colonel: the mess is not a club where men dine in plain clothes and the Colonel is only a fellow member. Mess dinners are, therefore, apt to be dull.

But when dinner was over and the subalterns gathered together in the billiard-room matters were different. Formality and stiffness disappeared, and the subaltern was the subaltern. Lee was still dazed. He had had so many new experiences that day that he did not feel up to much more than sitting on a bench watching the game, and in his quiet way taking stock of his new companions. But on this evening, and for the next few weeks while he was receiving his first impressions, he took their measure with considerable accuracy. For with all his innocent appearance he had the faculty of sizing up people with the infallible directness of a child. Nor was he

often wrong in his estimate. If he erred at all it was in the direction of thinking a man better than he really was.

The estimate of his brother officers which he formed on this and subsequent occasions differed much from what he had anticipated. He had imagined that they would be as keen upon making the regiment as masters were upon making the school. He thought there would be ardent discussion of military matters—past campaigns, great military reforms, or high military personages. He found, however, that the art of warfare was the last topic of conversation that was likely to rise. That was classed as "shop," and shop was emphatically barred. Few officers had come into the army for the sake of the profession. They were mostly men of means, and had joined the army as a pleasant way of spending their lives. "They had to do something and life in a regiment for a few years was as good as anything else. If they were drilled and worried too much they could always leave. If they had a good time, with plenty of polo and shooting, they could stay.

Lee was disappointed to find this. He only recovered when he found that these same men, as soon as there was any active service in sight, would move heaven and earth to get there. Keeness for sport did not mean indifference to service in the field. All it meant was disinclination to the monotony of preparation when active service was only a bare possibility of the future. If they could have been as certain that there would be fighting the next year as they were that there would be a polo tournament, they would have been as keen on preparing for the fight as they were on training for the polo.

This trait in their characters Lee could not know at first. His disappointment at their want of interest in soldiering was, therefore, natural. On the other hand, he was surprised at the friendliness he

experienced. From his bringing up Lee had been led to expect that the officers of a regiment would be very "worldly." And worldly he had been taught to regard as synonymous with wicked. He had expected to find them steeped in iniquity—followers of every evil course. To his surprise he found them excellent fellows; and in his heart of hearts he envied them their good nature. They never went to church except when paraded for service. Their talk was of little else than polo or ponies or dogs. Their language was coarse. With the exception of Denman and a few others they spoke in naked terms of that relationship between a man and a woman which Lee held, throughout his life, should be kept absolutely pure and too tremendously sacred for any spoken words. But in spite of all these "wickednesses" Lee found them a cheery lot, always ready to do each other and him a good turn, and secretly possessing an ideal of their own which Lee would have been thankful to come up to himself: when they wished to bestow the highest praise upon another they would say he was "a good fellow"; and a good fellow in their eyes was above a good Christian or even a good soldier, and was what they all set themselves to be.

These were his first general impressions about his brother officers. And to them he must have seemed a peculiar phenomenon. He was in deadly earnest about his soldiering. It was everything to him. At this stage he cared not for games or the Station Club or even leave. He was at last a soldier, and there was so much to learn about his profession he could think of nothing else. Wolseley's *Soldier's Pocket Book* was a second Bible to him. At school he had dreamed of being a Wellington. Now he aspired to being a Wolseley or a Roberts. There were, indeed, moments when it would seem too ridiculous for a young subaltern like he was to think of being so great. But once they had been subalterns, too, he

would reflect, and he would keep his ambition on fire.

Sometimes he would look on his brother officers and ask himself whether any of them would turn out a Wolseley. He had his doubts. The Colonel was a good soldier and so was Denman. But neither of them had the fire and the genius which Lee envied in Wolseley and Roberts. Then he would scrutinise officers from other regiments who came to dine at mess. There would be some who had seen service in Egypt or on the frontier, and these he would pierce with the searching eye of a child, hoping to find some genius. But none quite satisfied him ; and he became dispirited.

About his religion also he became depressed. Sunday he liked to have entirely to himself, and keep for remembrance of home and for religion. But it was no easy thing. Either he would be orderly officer or else he would have some work with his company. And church parade itself took much time—what with inspecting his men and attending to details. He did what he could to keep up the home tie ; but he missed the home life and those he could talk to unreservedly of what deeply concerned him. All about him was against religion. There was little to remind of it. There was no one of religion he could look up to and copy : no one to stimulate him. Denman had, indeed, come down on some who were scoffing at family prayers. But Lee did not look upon him as specially inclined to religion, and never spoke to him about it. And he felt that as far as those about him were concerned he might win his way through or drift to the bad for all they cared. And the newness of everything seemed to deaden his energy and determination. It made him careless, hurried, and inattentive in his prayers. He felt himself weak and fickle, and gradually falling away from the high standard with which he had left home.

He became unhappy with himself. His life was far harder than he had expected. And he began to fear that some great temptation would come, and he would find his power to resist it had wasted away.

He became depressed, too, thinking that he was bad at everything he turned his hand to. At a University his running and football would have counted : in the regiment they were hardly noticed. And what did matter in the regiment he was no good at. He could not afford to play polo. He had no taste for shooting, and did not possess a gun. He was not much good at billiards. Not in any of these could he be the same as the others. And he brooded over money matters ; for live as simply as he could and abstain from every expenditure he could, he was still spending more than his pay and the small allowance his father could afford to grant him. All this and the enervating heat and luxury of Indian life and subservience of Indian servants were pulling him down. And he might have fallen badly, but for the strong home influence. Regularly every mail he would receive letters from his father, his mother, and his sister. He could feel them expecting of him to keep up to the standard he had set out with ; and he would work himself up to keep to his good resolutions. Thus his home was the saving of him in these critical first months in India.

CHAPTER VI

REGIMENTAL LIFE

THE first few months in India had been a stern testing for Lee. Perhaps they were the hardest in his whole life—and the most critical. For, while still a boy, he had been torn from his accustomed surroundings and thrust into conditions wholly different; and whether he would have strength to hold his own and be himself or whether he would be absorbed by his new environment and lose his individuality had still to be proved; and he had begun to fear he was losing himself and was becoming despondent. But with the coming of the cold weather the worst was passed. He had youth and buoyancy on his side; and when the leave season was over, regimental parades had begun, and he was in the thick of soldiering, with his time well occupied, his spirits revived. By now, too, he was firm friends with Denman, upon whom he looked with some awe, but who was always kind to him.

“When you’ve had as many parades as I’ve had,” said Denman, “you won’t be as keen on them as you now are; but it is good for you to be like that while you are young. So stick to it.”

“I dare say I shall get tired of them, but I really do enjoy a full dress battalion parade, once the inspection is over and we are well out on parade. I feel tremendously proud of myself.”

“You wait till we’ve a parade of the whole station, then you’ll be prouder still. But you can have too much of them,” said Denman; and he went off to

look after his greyhounds. In the ranks he had had more than enough of drill, and now he had won his commission and had ample money he liked to enjoy his ponies and dogs and get away shooting whenever he could.

But to Lee, so fresh and young as he was, these battalion parades were absolutely thrilling. The thought of what the regiment had done in the past and what it might have to do in the future made him sometimes almost cry with pride. He had seen regiments on parade before. But to be himself taking part in the parade was a very different matter. As the regiment marched past in stately measure to music which stirred him to the soul he felt carried out of himself, and to be part of a whole of impressive power. He had all the time to be keeping his wits about him to do the exactly right and fitting thing, to obey promptly and accurately the orders he received from his captain, and to give the right orders and in the right way to those under him. And he had throughout to bear himself in a soldierly way. He had to be himself and very much alive and no mere onlooker. And yet he had very acutely, too, the sense of being one with this great whole which was acting so perfectly under a single control and moving so majestically about. And with this sense he felt himself growing greatly in importance. As a member of the regiment he was a bigger person than he was by himself alone.

The weather now was very different, too, from what it had been when Lee first arrived. So far there had been perpetual rain: now there was perpetual sunshine. A cold weather in Central India is as perfect a climate as can be found in the world.

And from working with them on parade and at manœuvres and in barracks and from meeting them day after day and night after night in mess he had got to know his brother officers well. His first im-

pression was right : they were good fellows and he liked them. But they varied in degrees of goodness : some were better than others. Denman was his favourite, and Lee never ceased to congratulate himself on his good luck in being in a bungalow with him. He adopted somewhat of a paternal attitude towards Lee, but that was only natural considering the difference in age and experience between them ; and Lee felt that he really cared for him and looked after him.

The other officers he liked in a general kind of way. But there was one who had a curious fascination for Lee though the two had hardly a thing in common. Contraries do sometimes attract one another. Jarrett was loud and foul-mouthed ; but coarse as was his language it was always accompanied by a cheery laugh. There was never any spite or malice behind the outspoken words ; and he had much mother-wit and a natural shrewdness in handling men. He was over six feet in height, beautifully proportioned, and always fit. He was born and bred in the country, and had been with horses all his life. Racing and polo were, therefore, his interests ; and he was a magnificent horseman and fine horse-master. To ride as he did in steeple-chases and across country required the highest skill and the finest courage. And perhaps this was the attraction to Lee.

Coming into the mess one evening after polo and gulping down a reviving whisky-and-soda, he shouted at Lee with his usual guffaw :

“ Why don’t you play polo, Lee ? You’re not a b——y bit of good to the regiment. You don’t do a thing. You ought to be a damned padre.”

“ I’d make a better one than you would, anyway, you ugly old hulk,” replied Lee.

“ By Gad, you would ! I’d make a damned rum ’un,” laughed Jarrett ; and the storm was over,

But though it was passed Lee felt remarks like this for he hated being out of things, and if he had been able to afford it he would have enjoyed polo as he had enjoyed football at school and Sandhurst. And hurt though he might be by such things being said about him some kind of hereditary instinct told him that he had much better right to be in the regiment than Jarrett had. He was a soldier and the other was not : he was only a sportsman, and was in the regiment for sport and nothing else. And he did not mind for long what Jarrett said, for he would say much worse things to others, and had some badish things said to himself. Another good point about Jarrett besides his skill and courage was his straightness. Racing men are not all renowned for their straightness. But Jarrett was : he always ran straight. And at cards he invariably paid his losses right off without fail, at whatever inconvenience to himself. He could be trusted. Also he could be depended on to help a man when he was down. So Lee had a sneaking admiration for him in spite of the dissolute life he led. All his vices were on the surface ; and beneath the surface were virtues which he seemed to take special pains to hide.

Polo Lee had to eschew. But cricket cost little, and he played much with the men ; and at the Colonel's request took an eleven to Agra to play against the Durham Fusiliers. He was the guest of the regiment and had a cheery time with them. But what he chiefly enjoyed was a sight of the famous tomb, the Taj. At that time he was no sightseer : the Army absorbed all his thoughts. Yet even he could not but be impressed. He was astonished, indeed, to find himself so deeply affected. He had never imagined the building to be on so magnificent a scale. And as he mounted the steps to the stately gateway and from the top saw the white dome framed in the red sandstone arch he felt something

unexpectedly rising in him. And the marble tomb was all the more impressive from being seen at the end of an avenue of dark cypresses with a line of fountains playing between them. Such exquisite beauty he had never dreamed of before.

And this was only the distant view. As he approached it seemed to grow in size. For a tomb it was gigantic: it was on the scale of a cathedral. And being set in a beautiful garden, with well-watered lawns and flowering trees and shrubs, and the garden itself surrounded by a lofty, gracefully tessellated wall of warm red sandstone, it was shown off to the best advantage. Then, in addition to the beauty of its form and setting, there was the loveliness of the delicate tracery on the carved screen round the inner sepulchre itself. And one finishing touch enchanted Lee—the echo under the dome, when the roughest note uttered down below is sweetened into angelic tones as it soars upward to the highest vault.

All this Lee silently noted in him and felt it still more as he paid other visits to the beautiful tomb in after years. He had been raised for the time from much that was coarse and sordid into an abode of serenity and light. He would give no expression to such feelings. They would be thought unmanly and sentimental. Nevertheless it was thus he felt and he returned to the regiment with his soul refreshed.

For the rest of the cold weather there were many parades and much hard regimental work, and in the afternoons and evenings polo matches, cricket, tennis, gymkhanas, dinners, and dances. Life was very full and Lee had plenty to occupy his time. He was carried quickly forward in the surging tide of life, and enjoyed it.

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CHAPTER VII

BROTHER OFFICERS

AS April approached each began to think of leave during the hot weather. To save expense Lee did not intend to take any—except a few days' casual leave. But the rest expected to have at least two months ; and Denman planned out what he was keenest of all upon—a tiger shoot.

“ I've persuaded the Colonel to give me two months' leave from April 15th,” said Denman to Lee at the end of March, “ and I'm going to have my first real holiday—get away from these infernal drills right out into the jungle. And I mean to get a tiger. I've a first-class rifle—a double-barrelled Westley-Richards express. And I've got Slade, the Commissioner, to advise me where to go and what *bando-bast* to make. It's always best to go to these civilians : they know much more about what shooting there is to be had than we do.”

“ Are you going to take anybody with you, or are you going by yourself ? ” asked Lee.

“ I rather want to go alone. It'll be better fun running the whole thing by myself. But Slade has given me an introduction to a man called Woods, a Forest Officer, who, he says, knows more about the big game in these parts than anyone else. And I've asked him in here to have a pow-wow about the *bandobast*. Good Lord ! How thankful I shall be when I'm really off. I'm sick to death of that old parade ground and the sergeant-major and the whole

crowd of them. And ever since I was gazetted to a regiment in India I set my heart on getting a tiger.”

At the beginning of April, Woods appeared and stopped with Denman for a night, and Lee was present at many of the discussions which took place. Woods looked as hard as nails, and as if there was not much of his life that he had spent inside a house. He had an easy way about him—the composure of a man who is master in his own line. And tough though he looked, and accustomed to hardship, there was not a trace of anything rough or coarse about him. He had, indeed, a cultured look—the look of a man of sharp and trained intellect and accustomed to use it in practical directions.

“ Mr. Slade has asked me to help you all I can over this tiger *bandobast*. But you know it’s a dangerous game for a new-comer, and I don’t much like your going by yourself at first,” he said to Denman.

“ I wish I could come with you on some shoot if you would let me,” said Denman. “ But the Commissioner told me that at this time of year you were too busy with your own work, looking after fireguards, in this dry season, and had a good deal of other forest business. But he thought you might help me with a good *shikari*.”

“ Certainly I will. You can have my own man, Nabu. But be very careful to do what he tells you. And be careful, too, about what you eat and drink. These servants you have in British regiments are a horrible lot, and heaven knows what filth they may give you. Look out for the sun, too. You’d better have a pad on your back as well as a solar topee. In May and June you’ll find the sun appalling. We live in the jungle all our lives, and have to be out in the sun as well as in the rains, and we know how to look after ourselves. But you straight from England don’t half take care of yourselves.”

Denman and Woods then went into all the details

of *shikar* kit, camp equipment, and so on. But Woods said to Lee when they were alone :

“Denman’s a good fellow, and frightfully keen upon getting his tiger. But I wish he were not going alone. And he’s one of those heavy full-blooded fellows who may easily knock up in the jungle at this time of year.”

“I wish I could go with him,” said Lee. “But I can’t possibly get leave. Besides, I would be no better, and I’m not so dead set upon shooting a tiger as he is and could not afford it if I was. So I don’t think about it. What I would like most awfully to do some day, though, is to get out and see an Indian jungle. It must be wonderful to be right in the wilds in the middle of a great forest.”

“It is. But the cold weather’s the time to enjoy that.”

“We can’t get away in the cold weather though. We’re tied by the leg by these drills.”

“You can get a good ten days at Christmas, can’t you?”

“Yes, we can generally get away then.”

“All right. Then next Christmas you and Denman must come and see me in camp and I’ll show you what the forest is like.”

“That’s most tremendously good of you. I’ll come like a shot, if I can get leave. Thanks ever so much.”

On April 15th Denman went off in great spirits with his *shikari* and servants and tents and rifles and the whole paraphernalia.

“Good-bye, old chap,” he said to Lee. “I’m going to have the time of my life. I’ve a splendid *bandobast*, and the *shikari* says I’m certain to get a tiger.”

In May Lee himself got away for three days to Kilagur, a small civil station three hours down the line, where he went to stay with a civil engineer he

had been at school with. But on the second day he received a telegram from the Colonel, asking him to come back at once as Denman was ill. Lee set off by the next train, knowing that something serious must have happened or the Colonel would not have telegraphed like that.

When he arrived at Jhanpur he found the Colonel waiting for him at the station with a grave look on his face. He told Lee how Denman had been brought in early that morning in an almost dying condition. From what his servants said it appeared that he had suddenly been taken very ill when out in the jungle. He had been in great pain, and had gradually become unconscious, so they had brought him in as fast as they could. On his arrival two doctors had seen him and hospital orderlies had been put in attendance over him. But he remained unconscious, and only kept asking for Lee.

As soon, therefore, as he arrived Lee hurried off to see him. Denman was asleep, but when he awoke he recognised Lee directly, and putting his hand on Lee's arm, said : “ Oh ! thank God, thank God. Now I don't mind dying.”

Lee had no idea that Denman cared for him so much as this and was deeply affected. As Denman disliked hospital orderlies Lee remained with him almost continuously day and night. In spite of all the two doctors could do he gradually sank ; his illness had not been taken in time, and he suffered agonies of pain. Once he opened his eyes, and in a clear voice began to pray—and he prayed so earnestly and longingly for a heaven he seemed to see that Lee almost thought it would be better if he *were* taken. Then he became quite quiet and just held Lee's hand, while Lee wondered at his praying like this, for outwardly he was not a religious man, and they had never spoken to each other about religion.

For some days he lingered, nearly all the time unconscious. In one brief interval of clear-mindedness he gave messages to those at home. Then he slipped back into unconsciousness, and the next day passed away. The end was so quiet and peaceful that Lee hardly realised what had happened. And even when he did he scarcely felt the shock, for all feeling seemed so numbed from his lack of sleep, the heat, and the long strain on his emotions.

It was only on the following day when, after a full military funeral attended by all the officers in garrison, the body was lowered into the grave that Lee realised his loss. Then a great flood of tears which he could no longer control came welling out. Till then he had been so occupied with what had to be done and had kept such control over himself that he had not shed a single tear. Now it all burst forth and he made no effort to restrain it, and the Colonel took him quietly aside that he might be by himself while the funeral party and band marched back to barracks.

That night at mess in the middle of dinner his head fell almost on his plate and he went fast off to sleep. He just heard someone say, "Poor boy, he has been up nearly every night," and then he dozed off, completely done.

Deep depression came on after poor Denman's death: he longed for someone to talk to, and he felt lonely and sad. But he soon noticed a great change in the attitude of his fellow-officers towards him. Even Jarrett was extraordinarily considerate, and, in his rough way, gentle. "You ought to get away for a bit," he said to Lee; "I can lend you five hundred rupees. I'm up to my eyes in debt, but I can let you have that much anyhow; and you can pay me back when you like." But the kindest of them all was Major Vivian. He came round to Lee's bungalow the day after Denman's death, and invited him to live in his own bungalow for a time.

"I don't like your living here alone," he said, "and I've plenty of room in my bungalow. You can see how you like it for a week or two, and if you care to we can share the bungalow together. I've a couple of rooms ready now, so come along at once."

Lee gratefully accepted, for the offer was made out of such pure kindness of heart. Major Vivian was irreverently called "Tummy" by the subalterns, on account of his ample waist measurement. He was fond of the good things of life, and not given to over-exerting himself; and Lee, in his ardent devotion to soldiering, had hitherto looked upon him with some disdain. Every evening at mess he would discuss at great length the merits of different wines and the various dishes; but of military duties he performed the barest minimum. He was, indeed, no soldier. But he was a gentleman—a typical, comfortable English country gentleman. He was devoted to shooting; he always kept two or three dogs; he was a first-rate whip, and generally had two or three smart ponies for driving, besides his two chargers; and he prided himself on his turn-out as he drove about the station.

This was all Lee had known about him so far; but now he found him full of the tenderest kindness of heart. He would invite Lee over to his side of the bungalow to tea every evening and lay himself out to be cheery and liven Lee up. He also put all his animals at Lee's disposal, explaining to him that it would be doing him a good turn if he would ride them as he was a light weight, and rode well, and they required exercise.

Lee could never have any enormous admiration for the Major, but he grew very fond of him and imbibed much worldly wisdom from him. For he was as good a judge of men as of horses and dogs, and was full of shrewd common sense. It was certain he would never be a great military com-

mander. But it was certain also that he would never do an ungenerous or dishonourable thing ; and it, was a happy circumstance for Lee that in the time of his trouble he should be fathered by any one so kindly.

After the usual morning drills Lee used to spend three or four hours in his bungalow reading up military books and studying Hindustani and Persian with a *munshi*. And after tea he and the Major would either drive out into the country or go down to the *serai* in the bazaar, where ponies were brought for sale, and Major Vivian would choose ponies and Lee would ride them. Lee, of course, could not compare with Vivian in judging an animal from its shape, for the Major had been brought up with horses all his life. But Lee from riding a pony could get a very fair idea of its spirit, and this would help the Major, and Lee did a lot of exercising and training ponies for him. And so the hot weather passed away less disagreeably than he had expected.

Then followed another cold weather of strenuous drills and manœuvres, guest dinners, dances, races, polo matches, and so on. Outside his military duties Lee's chief interest was racing. It was of a very mild, amateurish description ; but he got keen enjoyment from it. Under Major Vivian's guidance he had become quite good on a horse. He weighed under ten stone, was long in the leg, and very lithe and wiry. He had also plenty of pluck and determination as well as a cool head and good judgment ; and he came along very well as a race rider in a small way. And racing cost him nothing. Polo he could not afford, for that meant owning ponies of his own and he had still to keep very tight in his money affairs. But he would ride other men's ponies racing and he had no expense. He began with Major Vivian's. Every day he would be exercising these ponies, and often riding trials. And seeing how Lee had improved Vivian put him up on one of his ponies

at a small Station meeting. It was a first-rate mount—a spirited little Arab. Lee knew the pony and what a lot he had in him, and having run so many foot races himself he judged well what the pony could do. He saved him till near the end, and when they entered the straight he rode a splendid finish, and to his astonishment won the race.

Vivian was delighted. " Well done, boy," he said, as he clapped him on the back. " Ronnie Mostyn himself could not have ridden a better race. We shall make a great rider of you yet."

Jarrett, too, congratulated him in his rough way. The race was, of course, quite a small affair, but Lee had shown that he had the right stuff in him, and this raised him a lot in Jarrett's estimation.

And here I may note that the Ronnie Mostyn to whom Vivian had referred was a mysterious figure often spoken about with bated breath in the mess. He belonged to the regiment but was very seldom with it. Perhaps the proper way of putting it would be to say that the regiment belonged to him. For it was always known as Ronnie Mostyn's regiment in spite of his never being with it. He was one of the finest gentlemen riders in England. Steeplechasing was his particular line, and he had won the Grand National. He was a great man and known all over England. And it was not only his prowess in racing that made him so well known : he had in some subtle way the faculty of making his impress wherever he went. What he did—even what he wore—was taken by men as a model of what they should do. It was very remarkable. And Lee from so constantly hearing him held up for far more admiration than was given to any General of the day was greatly intrigued to know him. This he did eventually, as we shall see, but for the present he absorbed himself in his humble racing with Major Vivian's ponies.

And so the second cold season went by, and Lee

had settled down in the regiment. The necessity for very strict economy prevented his doing much that his fellow-officers did. He could not entertain like them and be the "cheery good fellow." And he could not afford to play polo or even go out shooting. Always he had to keep himself in hand. And partly for this reason and partly also because of a certain shyness he did not go much into the station society. But he gradually was getting over the feeling that he was of no good in the regiment. He liked his brother officers, and evidently he was making way in their esteem.

Lee was much helped, too, by his letters from home. He was constantly fearing that he was getting too absorbed in the regiment, and that the dear old home influence was waning. But if it was this was through no fault of those at home. Regularly every mail used to come letters from his father, his mother, and his sister; and each had an influence of its own. His father's letters were full of good sense and cheery encouragement; he seemed to divine in some mysterious fashion exactly the kind of difficulties Evan would meet with, and the true character of the different officers; and he would warn Lee against certain courses and encourage him in others. His mother's letters did not actually say much about love and affection or about high ideals; but they were full of the most anxious enquiries about details of his life, and in her accounts of the doings at home there was such pointed praise of certain individuals and certain actions that Lee knew she was really holding them up for his imitation. She was so afraid of "preaching" to him and yet so terribly anxious to see him going in the right way that he could not help feeling her influence on him. It was yearning out of every letter. And of all influences in his life hers was the strongest though she seldom said anything directly to him. Then his

sister's letters were different again. In them the love was openly and constantly expressed. Every letter was full of the tenderest affection and a great longing for them to be together again.

One only risk there was from his mother's and sister's letters. They were so full of pride in him—so certain that he was something above the ordinary run of men—that if he had taken them too seriously he might easily have become an insufferable prig. And at school as well as in his home those who did not strive after high standards of conduct had been so vehemently denounced, that when he joined the regiment and found most of the officers quite indifferent to such matters he might have become horribly self-righteous. He might have paid too much attention to the fond illusions of his mother and sister and really thought he was a superior being. The danger was by no means small. What saved him was the discovery that his brother officers had, unknown to them, a perfectly good ideal of their own, and that they usually approached theirs while he was still a long way off his. In doing good turns to one another, and in efforts to be cheery, to be good company, and good sportsman, Lee felt himself far behind them. And as long as they were ahead of him in these things he had too much sincerity to believe that he was their superior.

The danger was, in fact, in the opposite direction. He was so relieved at finding all this to admire in his brother officers and he was feeling so much more at home among them that the risk now was, not of his becoming a prig, but of his settling down comfortably to be an ordinary “good fellow,” like hundreds of others. And against this he was only saved by that spur within him which was ever goading him on.

CHAPTER VIII

PARADISE

BUT a holiday had now been fairly won, and in the next hot weather it came. Lee had done his best to overcome the pain it was to leave his home ; and for two years had worked hard at his regimental duties. Now came almost the happiest time of all his life. In the middle of June he received a letter from Mrs. Denver, inviting him to come and stay with them at Tirich for as long as he could get leave.

Tirich is a little hill station in the centre of India to which a few civil and military officers resort if they cannot get away so far as the Himalaya. And Mr. Denver was an Indian Civilian in the Political Department who made Tirich a home for his family to which he would come up whenever he could get leave. They were the old friends of his parents whom he had known at Ryde when he was at school, and who guessing he would be needing a change had hospitably asked him to enjoy the cool of the hills.

Lee accepted the invitation with alacrity though he little guessed the happy time he was to have. It was fiercely hot in the plains. If you were out in the sun its rays struck at you with malicious force. And whether you were in the sun or in the shade a wind of suffocating heat parched up every spring of energy you possessed. For the time life was not. You could make neither bodily nor mental

exertion. You barely existed. You had hardly the desire to eat. All you felt able to do was to sit in a long cane chair with your legs up and imbibe iced drinks the whole day long.

From out of this inferno, from dreary hot weather regimental life, and from an only man society, to a cool hill station where he could once more feel alive and where he could have the society of women as well as men he was now to be taken. And from having to talk with men whom he had never met till he came to India, and who knew none of his dear ones at home nor any of his friends, he was to find himself with people he had known in England, who knew his home and all about him and with whom he could speak as freely as he pleased.

This was the heaven he approached as he drove in a *tonga* from the baking train up the wooded hill-sides, the air getting cooler and cooler both as he reached higher and as the sun declined. Another difference, too, he found when he had been with the Denvers a few days. Since he had joined the regiment he had had no religious atmosphere to breathe, and his soul had begun to wither within him. In this family there was religious feeling as in his own home. Mr. Denver was away, but Mrs. Denver read family prayers every morning, and all went regularly to church on Sundays. The Denvers were a God-fearing family of the old school. For the first time since he had left England Evan Lee was with people who felt in common with him. And though naturally reserved and not inclined to give himself away straight off he felt at home with them at sight. The family besides Mr. and Mrs. Denver consisted of Nina, a girl of seventeen, Johnnie, who was nine years old, and little Annie, only four. The son, whom Lee had known at Ryde, had just joined a regiment in another part of India. Mrs. Denver was engaged on household matters most of the day ; so a great

part of the time Lee spent with Nina and the two children.

The middle of the day was hot, but in the mornings and evenings it was not warmer than a summer day in England, and, with a perfect certainty of weather, arrangements for walks, rides, and tennis parties could be made without fear of disappointment. Sometimes he would go for a solitary walk or ride about the station in the morning. But generally Nina would accompany him, and they would ride together in the cool early morning chatting away like a pair of children, and so absorbed in themselves they thought little of the beautiful woods through which they passed, and only looked down on the sweltering plains below to think how lucky they were not to be there too.

After the late breakfast Lee would lie lazily in the verandah during the hot part of the day, reading a book or talking with any member of the family who happened to appear, giving Johnnie practical lessons in geography or romping with little Annie, tossing her in the air again and again as she shouted with delight. In the afternoon preparations would be made for a tennis party, or sports would be organised in which each member of the family would be handicapped according to his or her age. Sometimes Nina and he would go to tennis with another family. Sometimes others would come to the Denvers. Always there was entertainment of some kind; for in India entertaining is easy and society is sociable. All were homely and friendly, and bent upon enjoying their time now they were out of the plains: there was little formality, and the friend of each was the friend of all. Whether there were also jealousies and bickerings Lee knew not: they did not affect him any way; and he was too young to trouble his head about them.

In the evenings one or two friends would generally

dine with the Denvers ; and after dinner Nina would sing. Perhaps she had no great voice nor much training ; but in India people are not particular, and all liked to listen to her, for she sang in an unaffected way and was a sweet girl, neat and dainty, and with pretty ways which endeared her to all.

Living constantly with many people of varied occupations, in the free way of India she was easy and ready in her talk ; and she had such a delicate refinement and such frank openness of expression that everyone took to her. In physique she was somewhat frail ; and with all her brightness there was just a trace of sadness running through her. But she was always bright and always occupied. In her home she found plenty to do, looking after the two children, arranging the flowers, practising her music, writing notes for her mother, and receiving or calling on friends. Perhaps there was a tinge of awe in her love for her mother, but she was devoted to her home, and more particularly perhaps to her elder brother and to her father. And it was this home atmosphere she did so much to make that more than anything else attracted Lee at this time.

So the holidays went by. Lee just enjoyed himself to the full, and never dreamed of what was happening to him from this constant companionship with an affectionate simple girl. He never thought of anything but the enjoyment he was having until one evening when she came up to him after a song, and said :

“ The Temperleys have asked me to stay with them for a few days, and I am going over to them to-morrow morning.”

“ How dreadful ! You never told me anything of this before. Why such a sudden invitation ? ”

“ The invitation came this afternoon and Mamma thought I ought to accept. They are always so very kind to me.”

She did not add, what she did not know, that her prudent mother, seeing how attached Lee and she were becoming to each other, had arranged the invitation. Nor did she add, what had frightened her very much, that her mother had warned her not to think anything of Lee's attentions as she was a mere girl, and he probably would think no more about her when he had left. This had terribly upset her, for she was perfectly innocent and had not, in fact, thought anything of Lee paying her attention. They were enjoying themselves together and neither she nor Lee had thought of anything else but what a good time they were having, and how perfect it was to be together.

Now all was changed at a stroke. He had not thought of love before ; but now she was going he knew that he was deeply, deeply in love.

"At any rate, I shall go with you to-morrow morning as far as the Temperleys," he said. And the next morning he walked along beside her pony for the two miles to the Temperleys, admiring her more every minute, admiring the sweetness of her look, admiring a pretty wave of her hair, admiring a little shade in the tone of her voice which told that she could love ; and pining more and more for that love that she could give.

"I shall see you again before I go ? " he asked as they parted.

"Oh yes. I shall come over before then," she said. But there was the slightest suspicion of restraint in her voice, due, though Lee did not know it, to the warning her mother had given her. And the old childlike frankness between them had gone—gone, may be, for ever.

Lee went back to the Denvers sad at heart and desperately lonely. All the sparkle seemed to have gone, and he felt dull and heavy, until one day she suddenly appeared at luncheon. He had come in

late and had not been expecting her. But as she jumped up from her seat with a bright pleased look to shake hands with him he felt changed completely : he suddenly came to life again ; and she, too, seemed glad to meet him.

She only stayed for luncheon. But the next day was Sunday and he knew she would be in church in the evening, for Mr. Temperley was the chaplain and he always took his guests to church both afternoon and morning. So Lee went to the evening service too ; and by good luck he was shown into the same pew that Nina was in. He had brought no hymn-book so he had to look over hers. He was almost touching her, and as he joined with her in the hymns and heard her sweet voice going out to God his love grew and grew. After the service she walked with him to the end of the grounds before returning with the Temperleys, and as they parted at the gate he made sure she loved him just a little. She was so pretty, so sweet, and so good ; and often in after years, when hard times came on him, he pictured Nina as she was that Sunday evening at their parting at the gate, and convinced himself that he saw some love in her eyes and felt it in the pressure of her hand as they said Good-bye. It may not really have been so : it may have been only her natural friendly way ; and she may have thought no more of him than of anyone else who came to stay with them at Tirich. Still he liked to think that if only for that moment she really did have some thought for him. And that picture of her at the gate by the little church in those beautiful hills, and of his waving to her as he went round the corner and of her waving back to him was a sweet memory which he cherished to the last.

But love leads to every contradiction. And now that he had discovered that he was in love he forthwith set to repress himself. All the time he kept

thinking of her, thinking of her every look and word, but then thinking too, how young he was, how impossible it was for anything to come of his love for many years yet. Ought he to let Nina know of his love or ought he to keep his secret to himself? This also troubled him. Once he actually wrote her a note to tell her of it. Then he tore it up and decided he must keep his love to himself. He had his home ones to think of too. What would *they* think of his falling in love when he was only twenty-one? They were always building their hopes on a great career for him. They had given a devoted love to encouraging him in his career. Would they not break their hearts if he did anything to hamper it? These were the dark clouds which came rolling up and filled him with doubts and perplexities and misgivings, and hid the sunshine of his love.

The following Sunday he had to leave in the evening so as to be back with his regiment on the Monday morning. Nina returned on the Saturday evening and she and Mrs. Denver and Lee went to church in the morning. Unexpectedly Mrs. Denver stayed on for Holy Communion, and it fell out that Nina and Lee had to walk home together. He would be leaving in a few hours. His bright holiday would be over and he would be leaving all this happiness to go back to hard, dull, hot weather regimental life. It was all he could do to keep to his resolution and restrain himself from telling of his love. At last, as they reached the house and were in the drawing-room together he could contain himself no longer. They had been talking of his having to leave and with a sudden impulse he took her hand and said:

"Oh, Nina, you won't forget me, will you?"

She was startled at his quick tremendous fervour. She uttered a trembling "No." And then the remembrance of his resolution came strongly back. A sense of shame as of having done something wrong

came over him. He stammered out that he must go and get ready, and they both went off to their rooms. They had discovered something both dangerous and sacred that neither of them had known before ; and both were frightened at it.

“ I don't think now,” said Lee years afterwards to Mrs. Temperley, “ that I did anything wrong on that occasion. I think rather that if I had not restrained myself but had gone on and spoken openly of my love, much pain might have been saved us both. But at the moment and for long after I felt ashamed of myself for having lost my self-control. I thought that it was somehow ungentlemanly of me—a very young subaltern as I then was—to take advantage of the liberty with which Nina and I had been thrown together. And I thought that Mr. and Mrs. Denver might well be angry at a young fellow without means talking of love to a daughter of theirs who in England would be thought scarcely yet out ! ”

For the rest of the day Lee's manner towards Nina most unwillingly became very forced and restrained ; and hers in consequence became the same ; and it was painful to both—or at least to Lee—to be any longer together. Before he left he tried to give her a note in which he told her he was sorry for what he had done, but assured her that he had not meant to trifle with her in any way. But both were so nervous that she did not see that he was wanting to give her a note and she turned away. He thought that she had purposely refused it, and he was hurt to the quick. That was the first in a long series of sorrows which were to follow in the course of his love ; and as he drove down the hill to the railway he thought his heart was breaking. But he was afterwards to find from far harder trials than this what it was for that to happen.

In the train on the way back to Jhanpur he had

a carriage to himself. He knelt down in it and prayed and prayed to God to give him Nina and to help him to work hard to gain for himself a position which would enable him frankly to tell her of his love and to ask her to marry him ; and when he got back to his regiment he set to work with a more determined will. Now he had a new stimulus to endeavour. The harder he worked the sooner he would be able to tell of his love. But till then he would not breathe a word to a soul. He would keep his love as a secret within him.

CHAPTER IX

FOREST LIFE

TWO months of sweltering heat he had to endure on his return to the regiment. All in him became limp; and every high purpose seemed to dissolve. But with the cold weather something of his old resolute nature came back. Officers returned from their leave—some from shooting in Kashmir; some from polo, gymkhanas, and gaiety at Simla; and some from home—and each brought with him a breath of fresh vigour. Then General's inspection, manœuvres, and other military activities looming in the distance made their call for a strenuous life. And Lee gradually began to recover himself and to go at his work with more of his natural energy.

He kept his love in the deeps of his heart, and threw his whole self into regimental duties. And then at Christmas came another good time. Woods, the Forest Officer who had made the arrangements for Denman, kept to his promise and invited Lee into camp to see something of life in the jungles, and to give him some shooting if he cared for it.

Often when I came to know him on the frontier I used to tell Lee that he had only one flaw: he was no sportsman. I myself was never so happy as when I was after burhel or ibex in the Himalaya, or bison or tiger in the plains. All my life I had been devoted to shooting and fishing, and I tried to instil into Lee my own ardour. But he would say: "I'm a miserable worm, I know, and I grovel abjectly before you,

but the fact is the keenness for shooting is absolutely lacking in me. I tried shooting sometimes, more to be doing the same as other fellows than for any other reason, but I could work up no enthusiasm, and I dropped it. I felt an impostor if I pretended to care for shooting."

"You were right there," I said, "for there's nothing I hate so much as sham sportsmen. My gorge rises horribly as I see men with none of the real spirit of the sportsman slaughtering beasts and birds in cold blood. If they don't really enjoy seeking out the animal or the bird, understanding its ways, and using their skill in stalking or shooting it, then they had much better leave shooting alone. But surely you do like all that kind of thing?"

"I like everything about shooting except the actual shooting," replied Lee. "As soon as I've got near enough to the animal to shoot it, I prefer to watch it. Wild beasts are fascinating to me. I do, though, admire you real sportsmen; and what I notice about all good sportsmen is that they are good fellows. They're men one likes. There are a few, like Smithers, who shoot from sheer love of *killing*. But most sportsmen really care about animals and are keen about their ways and habits. I can't help admiring even old Smithers, though. He's a solitary, cantankerous, jealous sportsman, but the animals he goes out to kill would kill him if they got the chance: they're dangerous animals. What he enjoys is getting at a real fierce beast and matching himself against it. He's a bit of a murderer and an infernally unsociable old thing; but he's as hard as nails, and full of pluck. So one can't help admiring him."

I relate this here to show what Lee's attitude was towards sport. He never pretended to be a sportsman, but he had a quite enormous delight in observing wild life of all kinds. He had unusual power of

observation and exceptional capacity, too, for enjoying the beauty of wild life. It, therefore, went against the grain with him to destroy it unless there was some absolute necessity either in sheer self-defence and to supply necessary food. But if he could go about the jungles seeking out the wild creatures of every description whether beast, bird, or insect; watching their movements, studying their habits, and marking their beauty he seemed to be just as happy as any sportsman. And that is why he was so excited when he was able to accept Woods' invitation and get away on a good long "ten days' leave" at Christmas time, which by working in Christmas Day and Sunday made up a clear fortnight.

Woods had written Lee a very kindly letter, recalling how they had met when Denman was preparing for his shoot. He said it would be lonely work to spend Christmas in the forest by himself, so he would be glad if Lee would join him. And as Woods had undertaken to provide a tent and camp equipment all Lee had to do was to get into khaki *shikar* clothes and make his bearer pack up his bedding and necessary clothing, and especially his field glasses—the best his old father could get, and which he had given Lee as a parting present.

As soon as the day's duty was done, Lee and his bearer drove down to the station, caught the night train, and before dawn the next morning had reached the little wayside station to which Woods had sent a *tonga* to convey them to his camp.

In this *tonga*—a low two-wheeled conveyance drawn by a couple of ponies changed every ten miles—Lee had to drive over an unmetalled forest road for forty miles to a forest bungalow. And here, for the ride to the camp itself, an elephant was provided for his kit and servant and a pony for himself. He was now far away from civilisation, and had the thrill of being for the first time in a true primeval forest.

About midday he reached Woods' camp, and was there warmly welcomed and seated down to lunch in a cool roomy tent set in among the tall forest trees. The regiment and all connected with it was forgotten. Everything about him was new and interesting. His eyes were everywhere, taking in each strange object. Squatting about the camp were numbers of wiry sparsely clad forest men, who greatly interested Lee. But the more immediate attraction was a regular menagerie of young animals and birds—bears, leopards, parrots, hawks—some of whom made free of the tent.

"I like to have these creatures about me," said Woods, as he saw where Lee's attention was. "I've always been fond of birds and animals, and that was my principal reason for joining the Indian Forest Department: we get rare opportunities of being among the wild animals. As a boy I lived in the country and spent most of my time bird's-nesting or fishing or shooting; and the books I cared for most were about natural history. And now I'm never thoroughly at home unless I'm here in the jungles and have my pets round me."

And Woods did, in fact, seem to work in quite naturally with the forest and its inhabitants. He had a peculiar way with these wild creatures which made them come to him when they would go to no one else. He was quite fearless with them, and did not mind how much he was pecked at and clawed and scratched; and they seemed to know at once that he meant them no harm and intended to be kind. And this knack of intimacy with wild animals gave him a wonderful understanding of them. He seemed to have the faculty of getting inside their skins and looking out on life through their eyes, as Lee was soon to find.

After lunch they sat under the shade of a tree and Woods propounded his plans. He had some time or

other to go to the top of a neighbouring hill to take a general look round, and he proposed that they should go together quite early the following morning.

"You will then get a good idea of this forest," he said, "and realise how immense it is and perhaps we may see some big game on the way. I shall take a rifle in case of accidents, but, if you don't want to shoot, take your field glasses as you will have plenty of use for them. Now I've some tiresome office work to get through, and you had better have a sleep in the deck chair, for I daresay you didn't have overmuch in the train."

It was hot in the early afternoon even though it was December, and Lee lay out in the chair and slept the sleep of the just knowing that for another fortnight there would be no parades, no more orderly office duty, no more dull mess dinners: he could have a real holiday. And poor boy, he was still only twenty-one and needed and deserved it.

They dined early and turned in early, and the next morning, well before daybreak, they were up and off for the hill-top. The air was fresh and exhilarating, and after a stiff climb through the jungle they reached the summit of the ridge. Above the sky was clear and blue. Away to the east was a red and orange glow with the sun just appearing over the saucer edge of the horizon. All round was a sea of brilliant greenery with ragged chaotic ridges of rock sticking up through it. And meandering through the valley was a glistening river with a sandy border. A mist was hanging about in the valley, but over all there was a beautiful purple haze.

Woods surveyed the scene with the air of a monarch. This was his kingdom. In that vast expanse not a tree might be felled without his word. He was lord of all, and he gloried in his dominion.

Forest officers like him lead a solitary life. They have no club, nor bridge, nor dances and dinners,

nor tennis, gymkhanas and race-meetings. But they have a good life of it all the same, except for the malaria and mosquitoes and horrible depressing damp in the rains. At this time of year no man could want anything better. They are right out in the wilds with wild life all round them. Woods had been in the Himalayan forests as well as in Central India—in the deodar forests of the Northern Himalaya and in the steamy, heavy tropical forests of the Sikkim Himalaya. For a healthy invigorating life, of course, the deodar forests are the best. You can go right up to the snows or down to the foot-hills, so you can have any climate you like. But there is not such gorgeous vegetation as there is in the tropical parts nor such wonderful insect life. So the northern forests are not so interesting for the naturalist as the tropical forests. But I do not wonder at Woods liking these Central Indian forests best of the lot. Often have I shot in them myself. They are crammed full of game. Polar bears are about the only animals you do not get there. There are elephants, bison, tiger, black bear, panther, deer of various kinds—sambhar, spotted deer, barking deer—antelope, pig, hyænas, jackal, wild dogs. But it was bison that I used to be after. It is only in very big forests like this where there is plenty of room to roam about that very shy animals such as bison and elephants exist. So you do not often see a bison. But he is a rare sight when you do—one of the grandest in nature. He is of colossal size, about eighteen hands in height and almost black, though not dull like coal, but sleek and shiny, almost like satin. His bulk is enormous, yet there is nothing clumsy about him. True, he is not graceful like a stag, but he is as alert as any deer, and can move almost as rapidly. And he is no slinker like the tiger or the leopard: he is a true monarch. He is might, majesty, and dominion embodied in the flesh. Nothing is more splendid

than a bison when he has taken the alarm. He stands erect and challenging, sniffing the air and ready for battle—alert not to fly like a stag, but to fight to a finish the fiercest beast of the forest. In his strength he is magnificent, every curve and line of his body tells of fitness for battle, and his whole mien speaks of sovereign power. He preys on none and fears none, and the whole forest bends in awe before him : even a tiger will not venture to attack him except in the last resort when famishing.

Beasts like that I love ; and another attraction to me of these Central Indian forests is their mystery. From some rise you look out on absolutely wild country, extending as far as you can see in every direction, and you know that it is the same for hundreds of miles. Bathed in the sunshine all looks dreamy and peaceful, and yet you know that the whole forest is full of these great animals and of marvellously vivid bird and insect life. It is most fascinating. Years afterwards on the frontier Lee and I used to talk of these Central Indian forests. He preferred the Himalayan forests with their deodars and spruces and vistas of mighty snowy peaks. But then he was not keen on big game shooting as I am, and I always stuck up for Central India with its grand animals and stirring life.

Woods evidently was of the same opinion, and took pride in showing his visitor the glories of his kingdom. After he had had a good look and made the notes he required he told Nabu and the two men with him to go on ahead and look out for the trail of any big game. He and Lee then started off down the ridge. The going at first was over rocks and stones with only sparse forest. But lower down the forest grew thicker, the trees—mostly sāl—became taller with firm straight stems ; and, besides these, clumps of bamboo were met with. Suddenly one of the men came back beaming and whispered the

information that he had picked up the tracks of a sambhar, which, according to the signs that only these jungle men can understand, must have passed by on the previous afternoon.

Lee was wild with suppressed excitement. "I'm not keen on shooting to-day," said Woods, "so you had better go along with Nabu. But be very careful. Don't run any risks, for there may be dangerous game about. Do exactly what he makes you any signs to do. Move very, very quietly, for these animals hear the slightest noise. And they spot at once anything unusual, so efface yourself as effectively as you can. And don't take out your watch to look at the time. The glint of it goes like a signal all over the place. You must remember about that with your field glasses too. Of course, the sambhar would scent you long before you see him, but Nabu will look after that. Good luck to you, and tell me all about it when you come back."

So Lee set off with Nabu and his assistant *shikari*. Now he really was seeing forest life, and as he moved stealthily and silently along with them he was astonished to find the forest was not so silent as it had seemed when he rode through it the day before. Coming from the cantonment and from the train it had seemed absolutely silent. Now as they went along so noiselessly the forest seemed full of the sound of crickets, grasshoppers, and cicades with the occasional screech of a crow, the harsh cry of the peacock, the bark of a deer, or the chatter of some monkeys. But with all these sounds there was yet a stillness which was like a tremendous presence. Though all was so still there was a feeling of intense activity all round. Hundreds of eyes were watching and hundreds of ears were listening to what you were doing. It was most weird and impressive and mysterious—almost awe-inspiring—but most fascinating too. And through all was the knowledge

that close by somewhere was this wary animal that they were after.

The sambhar had been feeding as he went along, and passing down into a valley had made its way along the banks of a beautiful stream flowing over a rocky bed sometimes in little cataracts, sometimes in deep cool pools. Clumps of feathery bamboos hung over it, delicate maidenhair ferns grew on the rocks, and on the hill-sides the straight giant sāl trees with their leafy crowns were festooned with creepers as thick as ropes. But it was not a close dense forest : often there were glades of park-like appearance and soft short grass. And after Lee and his men had been following the track for a couple of hours Nabu called a halt, while he went on ahead to prospect. From some droppings he inferred that they must be getting fairly close to the animal.

Lee lay down on the grass under the cool shade of the giant trees and ate some lunch, and would have gone off to sleep, for all was so conducive to slumber—as forest animals and birds themselves feel at noon-day—but Nabu in half an hour returned with a broad smile on his face, and, putting his hand to his mouth to enjoin absolute silence and pointing in the direction he had been, indicated unmistakably that the animal was there.

Now the crucial moment was approaching and Lee was instantly tense with excitement. They had been going silently before but now Nabu seemed almost to glide along. He would make the most agonising face if poor Lee made the slightest noise in stepping on a loose stone or in crushing a twig. Lee felt a clumsy lout beside this agile man, and followed awkwardly behind him. After a time Nabu signalled to halt again, while he went forward just a little further. And soon he was seen making frantic motions with his fingers to Lee to keep down and be very silent. Lee crept up to him as best he

could, and lay down close beside him. Nabu, his face drawn with excitement, pointed in a certain direction, and Lee looked, but could see nothing. He felt a perfect fool as Nabu made the most fearful grimaces to indicate the beast was there. Still Lee could see nothing: he was beside himself with disappointment, but was helpless. He could not get Nabu to indicate more clearly than he was already doing where the animal was; but he could make out nothing till at last in a bamboo clump he detected four brown legs. Now he was satisfied, and did not mind how long he had to wait for the rest: he was actually in sight of the animal.

He signed to Nabu that he had seen the animal, and by mutual signals they agreed to stop quietly and watch till he moved off. After an interminable time he did. And then, through his glasses, Lee had a full view of him. It was his first sight of a wild animal in its native haunts, and he was absolutely fascinated. There the stag stood, with his head erect and his antlers thrown back—a real lord of creation, dignity in his whole posture and grace and spring in every line. And there was something more. Lee was not looking on a drowsy complacent cow in a meadow. He had before him an animal alert in every faculty, fit in every fibre, sheeny with health, ever ready to fight a rival or spring from sudden danger. This combined beauty and alacrity deeply impressed Lee, and he could scarce drag himself away from watching the animal and noting its unceasing vigilance—the price for life it had to pay every moment of the day.

It was a grand picture, and Lee marked every detail of it and imprinted it on his mind. But he told Woods afterwards that he was as much struck by Nabu as he was by the deer. And Woods said he might well be so, for these forest men are marvels at tracking. They will pick up the slightest sign of an

animal's passage, a turned-up stone, a bent twig, or some hair on a branch, and will follow up the track often at a jog trot. They will calculate to a nicety how long it is since the animal has passed. And when they are near it they can move through the jungle with almost the stealth and silence of a serpent.

As Lee was interested in them Woods proposed that they should go and see one of their villages. So in the freshness of the early morning, Woods and Lee set out on foot next day for the village. Passing through the forest they came upon a group of the big grey lungoor or hanuman monkeys, swinging from branch to branch and uttering a kind of whoop—a joyous, almost musical, sound—as they nimbly sprang from tree to tree. They were extraordinarily agile and in perpetual motion. Their eyes kept piercing in every direction. And it was not one pair of eyes that was incessantly on the look: it was dozens of pairs. And Lee looked upon these creatures with peculiar interest and some little reverence when Woods told him that they must be cousins of our own progenitors. Not from them directly are we descended, but a long way back we and they must have a common ancestor. Our ancestors must have lived with their ancestors in the trees like these in the forest, and lived much the same kind of life as they are living to-day—this was the interesting point.

Insatiably inquisitive they were, too, incessantly prying into things, turning over stones to see what was underneath, examining fruits, sticks, anything that came their way, handling things, testing them, seeing if they would break, tasting if they were palatable. And their keen inquisitiveness and with it the habit they got into of handling things, breaking off branches to use for defence, using stones for breaking nuts or throwing at animals, must have been the chief means by which our ancestors made

their first step upward out of what we call the brute creation. Woods had often tried to work the problem out here on the spot, face to face with these monkeys, and this was the conclusion he came to. There was a big jump, of course, from the most intelligent group of apes to the least intelligent group of men, but not so great a jump that the apes could not make it.

Proceeding on through the forest Woods and Lee were soon to see some of the most primitive men still living—men probably not very dissimilar from the first human beings who, giving up their tree life, had come to settle on the ground. They arrived at a Baiga village perched up in a remote corner of the hills. It was a queer, untidy collection of huts, six or seven feet in height and made of bamboo and mud, such as could be put up in a day ; and very like what the first men must have erected. The men themselves had a shaggy look with unkempt hair and beards ; but their figures were almost perfect ; their limbs were lithe and wiry, and they carried not an ounce of superfluous flesh.

Woods was immediately the centre of the entire population. Many described their ailments to him and he produced some simple medicine for them. Quinine especially they wanted, for they suffered much from malaria in the rains. With all of them he had a benevolent, paternal way, and though they are shy of strangers he from living among them had won their reverence and affection : they looked upon him as a kind of god.

Walking through the village Lee asked leave to look into some of their huts. There was not much in them—only bamboo matting for sleeping on, earthen vessels for water, leaves for plates, gourds for drinking out of, small axes, sickles, and spears. According to Woods, they fed on fruits, berries, and roots (which they would pick up in the forest round) and occasionally a little rice or millet which they

would buy with the money earned by the sale of forest produce. They would eat the flesh of nearly all animals when they could get it from the chase.

Outside the village was a little rough cultivation, but they despised agriculture as an occupation inferior to hunting. And their fields had little chance with the herds of deer about and the prospect of troops of elephant trampling through them.

Woods got them to show their skill and dexterity in using the axe. They threw it with marvellous precision at a mark; and he said they would also knock over small deer, hares, and peacocks. Sometimes they would even kill a panther with a single blow.

"In hunting wild animals," he said, "they are not only exceedingly bold and courageous, but they back up one another to the death. They throw the whole of themselves into the hunt, and become absolutely absorbed in it and think nothing of whether they are hungry or tired or of the risks they are running. And if one man is felled by a leopard I've known others go in and fight and kill the leopard to save their fellow's life. I've the greatest admiration for them. And primitive man must have had to contend against many more of these animals, for dangerous beasts were much more numerous then. Of course, they only got along by living in the trees, like those lungoor monkeys. And when they came to the ground for food they would always have been ready to spring back into the trees. These forest men are pretty nippy at that to this day when a tiger is about."

What primitive men fed on was a puzzle to Lee, but according to Woods the forest produced quantities of food. There were forest fruits like bananas, and all kinds of berries and nuts and also flowers like those of the mahua tree, and roots and young shoots and leaves and the sap of some trees. Then they

would get honey, birds' eggs, and tortoises' eggs, and grubs and frogs and lizards. And as they became more omniverous they would take to fish and birds and hares and antelope. And primitive men must have had much tougher digestions even than these forest men have, and in famine time these eat berries and leaves that the ordinary villager could not possibly digest, so the digestion of primitive men can be imagined.

"And, mind you," continued Woods, "man would have to secure his food in face of keen competition. Troops of apes and monkeys would be after much the same class of food. Wasteful, destructive parrots would be getting at the fruit before it was properly ripe, and wasps and hornets would be at it too. Pig and hares would be gnawing at the same roots and shoots that he liked. And cats and snakes would be, like him, searching for birds' eggs. And besides always having to be on the look out against the big dangerous animals while he was searching for food he had to be on the guard against all kind of other creatures, snakes, scorpions, centipedes, stinging spiders, and such-like, and he would all the time be worried by hornets, wasps and bees, biting ants, gadflies, mosquitoes, and midges. How he ever got through I can't imagine. I feel inclined to take off my hat to every forest man I meet, in honour of his predecessors."

The next day was Christmas, and Woods was fully occupied in camp. This was the *sahibs'* "*bara din*"—great day—and, arrayed in their best clothes and bringing offerings of various kinds, all the servants and retainers came to salaam to Woods. The presents were baskets of fruit or vegetables or sugar, raisins, and nuts, or forest produce of some kind. But every retainer brought some little thing, and in placing it

at Woods' feet salaamed, and in his own way wished him a happy Christmas.

And Woods on his part had prepared a great entertainment for them. According to their castes he had provided quantities of food and comestibles. Mutton, goat, rice, sweetmeats, cakes, raisins, currants, oranges, lemonade—all these were given them to cook in their own way or eat and drink as they liked. Besides this, he distributed among them small presents of cloth, turbans, and such-like. And he had brought three musicians to contribute to the good cheer. When all was ready he went round telling them to eat as much as they could and enjoy themselves; and they kept salaaming gratefully to him.

“ I let myself go on Christmas Day,” he explained to Lee. “ It comes but once a year, as they said in our childhood, so it's quite right to be of good cheer. I am pretty stiff with my men all the other 364 days, and a little relaxation on Christmas is a relief. And they love a *tamasha*. As long as they can have a festive day every now and then they don't mind pulling a bit extra when a strain comes. You see, sometimes in this forest work I have to make a real big call upon them; and they always come up to the scratch; so I feel I ought to do something for them at Christmas. Besides all which I like doing it. There's not one of them who if I were in a tight place out in the forest or down with illness would not risk his life for me. They're good chaps, and I'm very fond of them. And I like seeing them have a good time in their own way.”

Lee thought to himself how very different these men were from the servants he saw in cantonments. A British regiment manages to collect about it all the rascals in India. When it first arrives in the country only a few of the senior officers who have been there before can speak any Hindustani, so the

young officers have to employ servants who can speak English. And servants who can talk that language are for some mysterious reason a depraved lot. The mere fact of speaking English seems to demoralise them. And for some other occult reason, as soon as a young British subaltern has a depraved English-speaking servant in his employ, he is overcome with an irresistible impulse to hammer him. He is otherwise a well brought-up, gentlemanly English lad. But there is in the fawning obsequiousness of his servant what makes his gorge rise. He is vaguely aware that Ram Bux is pilfering his things and charging extra on every article bought for him from the bazaar. And one day he can stand it no longer, and Ram Bux undergoes condign corporal punishment and is dismissed. His *sahib* then gets a "bad name" in the bazaar, and only a worse servant still will dare come to him. And so the process goes on—very much to the detriment of the Englishman's good name in India. The Englishman judges of all Indians by his servants and the servants judge of all Englishmen by the subaltern in his most unfortunate moods. And so the evil spreads. But here with Woods there was an altogether different spirit—and one much more congenial to an Englishman.

While Woods was making his arrangements for entertaining his men, Lee was in his tent reading his Christmas letters from home. His people were always most punctual in ensuring that he should have letters by Christmas and never failed him. They had arrived by *dâk* the evening before, but he had kept them to read on Christmas Day. Each letter he now read was full of deep affection, and again that feeling of home-sickness came strongly on him. He longed to feel once more that tender love which surrounded him at home. In the old Christmas Days he scarcely noticed it : it was all taken as a matter of course, as part of the natural order of things. But now again he

realised how strong and deep that home love was and how much it had become to him. He could hardly be enjoying himself more than he was doing at present in the forest. Yet to-day he pined for home. It seemed as if nothing else in the world could compare with it. Even if he had been there he would not, in all probability, have uttered one word of love—or heard a word either. But it would have been in the faces of all about him and in every act and deed. He could picture his old father at the Christmas dinner pressing him to have some more champagne, and saying that young men nowadays didn't know what a good thing wine was. And he could see his mother beaming with delight, and looking upon him as an angelic being, the like of which had never appeared upon this earth before. It was this sweet atmosphere of love he longed to breathe again to give him life. And he yearned to be in England.

The event of the day was the dinner. A magnificent repast had been laid out on a table in the open air with a glorious fire close by. Not that a fire was needed for warmth, but the sight of it added to the gaiety of the occasion. And Woods meant to do things thoroughly this Christmas. He had had out a huge plum pudding from home ; a wild pea-hen took the place of a turkey ; and there were various kinds of "Europe" luxuries, such as *pâté de foie gras*, tinned salmon, tinned peaches, almonds, and raisins, besides champagne and liqueurs.

"I rough it most of the year," he said, "so I like to spread myself at Christmas. I never go in to a Station if I can help it : I prefer to be here in my own kingdom. But whenever I can I get someone to come and spend Christmas with me, so as not to be quite alone while my men are gorging themselves silly. And it's very good of you to tear yourself away from cantonment delights and have compassion on me."

Then filling Lee's and his own glass with champagne he raised his and said, "Here's to absent friends. Good luck to them, and may their shadows never grow less."

Having eaten and drunk their fill, comfortable chairs were drawn up to the camp fire, and they both lit pipes and rested back in their chairs in great contentment.

CHAPTER X

FITNESS

WOODS came into Lee's tent one morning and said that he had just heard from a village on the edge of the forest—one of the ordinary villages, not a forest village—that during the night some deer had been in their crops and that a leopard, too, had been seen.

"These deer are a perfect curse," said Woods. "The poor villagers put up thorn hedges round their fields, but when their millet is growing up green and succulent, deer come trampling through the hedge and play old Harry."

"I thought the villagers had men to keep them off?"

"So they do. But the men go to sleep and the damage is done. And the leopards are worse than the deer: they carry off goats and dogs and even ponies—and young children too at times."

"What are you going to do about it?"

"I've arranged for a beat. Nabu has already gone out to fix the *machans*—you know the rough platforms of branches and leaves they put up in a tree for us to sit in. You shall go in one with a *shikari*. I shall be in another, and the *havildar* will be in a third: he has an old rifle of his own. And I will lend you a rifle, but only shoot if you can make a fair certainty of killing the animal, for I hate leaving wounded beasts about in the forest."

After early breakfast they rode off in the delicious

cool of the morning to the three *machans*. Nabu had already left to arrange for the beat—all available men in the village having been commandeered to take part.

Before they climbed the trees into their *machans*, Woods said to Lee :

“Now, mind you, when I’m out on *shikar* I’m very strict. I’m worse than any Colonel. I will not have the slightest slackness. If anyone is careless it means missing the stag and it *may* mean some unfortunate beater losing his life or being badly mauled if there is a dangerous animal about—a tiger or a leopard or a bear. And I won’t have any of that. You’ve not been out before, so you’ll not mind my speaking to you quite straight.

“Once you are in the *machan* you must be as mum as a mouse ; sit as tight as wax, and not wink an eyelid. You’ll find it pretty hard at first and very boring. But it has to be done. Remember that, though you may see and hear little, a deer or a leopard may see or hear you very easily. And if he does you may spoil the chance not only for yourself, but for us as well.

“We’re after sambhar, but there may also be a leopard in the beat. It’s a hundred to one that he’ll slip through the beaters, for leopards are as crafty as monkeys, and lie out on the branch of a tree or hide behind a small bush, or tussock of grass, or even a stone, and they blend so closely with their surroundings it’s impossible to see them. But there’s just a chance they may beat a leopard up to us, so you must be on the look out. Keep in your mind all the time that a leopard may be coming, that he’s the most cunning beast in the forest, that he decides in an instant and is off in a flash.”

Lee then got up into his *machan* with a *shikari* and made himself as comfortable as he could, as he would have to remain for two or three hours in a

necessarily cramped position, and after Woods' rigid instructions he could hardly dare to move.

The long wait began. There was a soothing silence all round. Not an absolute silence of course, for as long as there is insect life about silence is never complete. But there was only that droning hum which tends to seduce one to slumber rather than keep one awake. The sun became hotter and hotter, and that too conduced to sleepiness; and Lee was beginning to feel more and more drowsy when the distant call from a man rang out and he knew the beat had begun.

Now all sleepiness was gone; and remembering what Woods had told him he tautened every faculty while keeping as still as a rock. In the excitement he forgot about the cramp which was all that kept him from falling asleep before; and he almost strained his eyes out of his head in his efforts to see any moving thing in front of him.

"Tap, tap, tap," came from the distance as the long line of beaters struck the trees on their way towards the *machans*. And then came a thrilling sight—a procession of the forest animals marching silently past him, all quite unconscious he was there, and thinking only of the tapping sound behind. First came a jackal creeping through the undergrowth, halting, listening, and then going on to get away from the threatened danger behind. Next appeared a peacock strutting along, jerking out its head, pausing, marching on again. A frightened hare followed scampering away hard. And after him came a weird uncanny looking beast such as Lee had not seen before, but which he soon recognised as a hyæna—an evil-looking animal with no attraction whatever about it.

And now the tapping was approaching nearer, and the time was come to be more than ever on the alert. The chance would come and vanish in an instant.

Lee kept tight hold of his rifle and peered with the whole strength of his eyesight into the jungle passing his eyes quickly from one spot to another, and listening with all his ears for the slightest sound besides the tapping and the insects. He neither saw nor heard a thing. But presently he felt his *shikari* press his arm. Lee glanced at him. He was intensely excited, but made only the slightest sign with his head in a certain direction. Lee looked there and at first could see nothing, but soon he detected the slightest movement and then he saw that the animal was not a sambhar, but a leopard ! A quiver ran through him. He was in the near presence of dangerous game. He watched intently and clutched his rifle. The leopard was almost invisible against the flecking of the sunlight through the trees, but Lee could just make it out creeping stealthily through the undergrowth in the direction of Woods. A shot rang out. There was a fierce snarl from the leopard and wild shouts from the beaters. A second shot and the leopard was killed. The beaters gathered round in great excitement, hugely pleased with the result. And Lee descended from his *machan* and joined Woods by the animal.

“ Well, that brute’s done, and a good riddance too,” said Woods that evening at dinner. “ But I’ve a sneaking regard for these poor beasts all the same. They have to work hard for their living. The whole forest is alert against them, and they can only earn their daily bread by beating the rest through superior cunning. These deer on whom they prey are always about together, and are perpetually on the *qui vive* with eye and ear and nostril. One or other of them detects the slightest sound or movement and instantly scents danger. To get anywhere near its victim a leopard has almost to *worm* its way along, crawling along the ground flat on its stomach. There must be nothing like a sudden jerk. Its movement must be

so slow, so stealthy, so patient, and faultless that it can hardly be noticed even if you know it is there. Many a time, no doubt, he fails to get within striking distance of his prey. Some chattering monkeys or screeching parrots will give the wretched leopard away after all his pains. But if he can get within about twenty yards he will gather himself together ever so gradually and cautiously for the great pounce. And then with a few tremendous bounds be on his quarry in a flash. But here again at the very last moment he may fail. The deer is faster than he is once it gets a start, and if the leopard does not cover that twenty yards swiftly enough, or make his aim with the strictest accuracy, his dinner for the next few days is lost. And you may depend upon it he often misses his prey; there are so many odds against him. A leopard's life is not all beer and skittles."

For the remaining days Lee was content to wander about the forest with a *shikari*, who would help him to see the animal life and prevent his being lost. By disposition Lee was a naturalist and not a sportsman. And if he had not been absorbed in soldiering he would now have taken vehemently to natural history. For the forest life was a revelation to him—a perpetual delight. He never tired of watching its endless variety. He would seek out the big trees, walk all round them taking them in from every side, admiring the tall and stately stem of one or the rich foliage of another. Or with his glasses he would watch a group of monkeys or a flight of parrots feeding on some luscious fruits and chattering away as they dashed from one fruit to another, and with reckless waste threw each half eaten to the ground. Or he would watch the squirrels darting from branch to branch, cocking up their defiant tails and turning their heads this way and that in unceasing watch. Now he would pick up some flower and examine it

for every beauty either of form or colour it possessed. And now again he would follow some gorgeous butterfly and revel in its radiant colours.

In the heat of the day he would lie down where he would be tolerably free from insect life, and, like most animals, have a quiet dose, for observing closely is exhausting work. And in the afternoon as the birds and animals became alive again and sallied forth to find their evening meal he would arouse himself and set out too. And sometimes after dinner he would wander into the forest close around the camp. For the nights were almost more fascinating than the days. The trees stood out in dim impressive columns. Through the overarching canopy of leaves were breaks of clearest sky sprinkled with brightly glistening stars. Weird uncanny noises would issue from the darkness, telling of some night-bird piercing its victim or of some beast of prey upon the prowl. And judging from the din they made the insects were more alive at night than in the day. Lee felt himself set in the midst of deep mysterious life thrilling invisibly round him. He could see nothing. But life in myriad forms was beating all about him, he could hear. And there was something awesome in the knowledge.

Thus the days and nights of his short holiday went by ; and his observations and the discussions he had with Woods, who was as good a naturalist as he was a sportsman, greatly widened Lee's horizon. This life in the forest may have been "jungly" in comparison with cantonment life, but it had an immensely wider outlook. And there was a closer connectedness of things than he had ever imagined before. The world was not cut up into separate watertight compartments hermetically barred from all connection with one another. Wide differences there were between Nature's innumerable forms and manifestations, but no insuperable or unseverable barrier cut

off anyone from the other. All seemed connected together in a single intimate whole. Coming straight from cantonments he yet felt affinity with these forest people so clever in their forest lore. Between them and the monkeys there was evidently no little in common. And so on with the whole incalculable life of the forest: there was no sharp unbridgable division anywhere that he could see. Jumps there were. But no gulfs which could not be leapt.

Even the stars did not seem so remote and apart as they had done. As they peered through the tree-tops they, too, seemed to partake in the general life. They were the great connecting links. They connected both in distance of space and in distance of time. They looked down on Evan's home in England as on this camp in the Indian forest. The same stars looked down on us to-day as saw men originally emerging from the beasts, thousands of centuries ago. And on the higher men of the future the self-same stars would still be beaming. They gave a sense of steadfastness and continuity to the whole.

And taking a general view of this life in the forest it seemed to Lee to be on the whole happy enough. There was a deal of cruelty and pain—young birds seized from their very nest to the despair of their parents, the remorseless pounce of a beast on its prey, the torturing sting of the snake and the hornet. Man himself was not above approach: he also was cruel and gave pain. Still, as Lee saw it, Nature was not all "red in tooth and claw."

"No," agreed Woods when Lee was discussing this point with him, "Nature is not *all* red. There *is* a cruel hard struggle. You can't get away from that. And the cry of some animal as it's being seized pierces through me and makes me miserable for days. But there's another side. Birds and beasts of prey have often higher qualities than the timid creatures on whom they prey. They have courage, audacity,

alertness, physical fitness, intelligence, and skill. The beast or bird which may be guilty of some cruel act has to be exceedingly cunning and fit or he will starve. He only lives by his wits and his skill. Unless he perpetually keeps himself up to the mark he dies, just as his prey, unless he likewise keeps himself up to the mark, is killed. The penalty of death for failing to live life to the full hangs over both alike. And the general result is the fitness you everywhere see in wild life. Every creature in this forest is in tip-top condition and alive to its finger-tips."

"I have noticed that too," said Lee, "they all look so much more beautiful than animals in the 'Zoo.' That's what struck me in the sambhar on my first day out and I've been remarking it every day since. You would think that in the 'Zoo,' where they are carefully protected from every danger and given all the food they want without having to work for it, they would look better and be happier than these animals in the forest who have to work for every atom of food and are in danger of their lives all the time they are working. But it's just the other way on. The wild animals I've seen are much more beautiful and look happier."

"Yes, it's a 'contrairy' world," said Woods; "everything is done for the animals in the 'Zoo,' and yet they look all limp; their lines have lost their grace, and there's no joy in their movements. Here in the wilds the beasts and birds and insects are in a state of incessant struggle, but they are sharpened by it in every nerve and fibre. They are kept at their best. They live life to the full and enjoy it."

"And you must remember this, too," continued Woods, "that besides the cruelty there are most touching cases of parental devotion even among hawks and other birds of prey. They are often affectionate mates and devoted parents. The way animals help one another is also very remarkable.

And often you see unspeakable courage—a bird defending her young or a boar fending off a tiger are examples. So there is a good deal besides cruelty in Nature, and living as I do in the forest I get to look on life here as a whole, and over long periods of time, besides only the present, and then I see that the general result of the awful severity, besides great competence and efficiency, is extraordinary happiness. It's curious, but it's a fact. The discipline is terrible, but the result is good. Animals are not depressed by the cruelty and hardness of the struggle. Their liveliness brings them gladness. You can see it in the song of birds and the play of animals. They all enjoy life. I've seen birds in a very frenzy of joy; and animals display their gladness in their frolickings and romps. Viewed from a far standpoint we can see that pain does subserve a good purpose. Pain incites to good; the pain passes, but the good endures. Forest life is not so unreasonable as it would appear when we focus our attention on the pain alone. The life here is not all caprice and chance: it is not an arbitrary power that is at work in the forest. And the more we know about this forest life, the more reasonable does it appear. Not cruelty and pain, but joy and beauty is the main impression I get from it—and the pain simply sharpens the enjoyment.”

CHAPTER XI

THE ADJUTANCY

LEE returned to his regiment keener than ever. The impression of the forest was strong upon him. He was deeply imbued with the forest spirit of competence ; and he meant to instil the same quick alertness into his men. It was the business of soldiers to fight ; and they must be as vigilant, as cunning, and as physically fit as these denizens of the forest among whom he had been living. If soldiers were slack and flabby, not only they but their country would suffer. And unless they were completely fit and prepared they would never be able to attack with success. His business, then, was to make them equals of the forest kings. And an opportunity for bringing into effect his ideas of fitting soldiers for their part now unexpectedly presented itself.

When he had settled down to tea in their bungalow after his return Major Vivian said to him : " I've something important to talk to you about. Hamilton has applied for a year's leave. He was never very keen about the adjutancy, and was rather forced against his will to take it on poor Denman's death. But it has meant more work than he cares for ; he has plenty of money, so the extra pay is nothing to him ; and I don't suppose he'll stay long in the Army, so the experience is nothing either. He wants to get back to his place in Yorkshire and look after that for a time ; and the Colonel is giving him leave, so the adjutancy will be vacant, and the question is

who will fill it. The Colonel has been asking my opinion, and has mentioned two or three names. Among them was yours. He has a great liking for you, but he said you were too young. How old are you?"

"I shall be twenty-two in June."

"That's rather young for an important position like the adjutancy. But I told the Colonel that living in the same bungalow as we are I had seen a lot of you, and that there was no one in the regiment keener on soldiering. I said you worked hard, and had a decent amount of common sense. The Colonel then asked me point-blank if I would advise your being offered the adjutancy; and I replied that no one better deserved it. At this he seemed much relieved. All along he had wanted to offer it to you. Only he's a cautious man, and wanted to make sure of his ground first. So he fortified himself with my opinion. He wants to see you this evening at 5.30."

Lee went round to the Colonel's bungalow, and was most kindly received.

"I have taken an interest in you, Lee," said the Colonel, "from your first arrival. I could see you really cared for your profession; and you have worked hard and well ever since. Now, as Major Vivian will have told you, the adjutancy is becoming vacant, and I am prepared to offer it to you. I had doubts about it, considering how young you are. But we all get older, though none of us can get younger. That fault in you will be correcting itself every day. Still it is an experiment: poor Denman and Hamilton were considerably older than you. And as Adjutant you speak for the commanding officer, and men older than yourself may resent so young a man as you saying things to them in the authoritative kind of way an Adjutant has to very often. You will be in a position of considerable responsibility, and you will have to go very cautiously

at first with the officers. And with the non-commissioned officers and men, too, you will have to be careful. The drill you know thoroughly well. You are as smart as anyone at that. But you have to handle men as well as drill them. Running a regiment is not all a matter of giving words of command on parade. There is a lot of human nature to be looked after too. By your manner you may rub the sergeant-major and sergeants up the wrong way, and make them as surly as bears. Or by your manner you may smooth away a lot of difficulties. We have to deal with Englishmen, and Englishmen are the easiest people in the world to lead if they are not 'messed about,' as they call it, but are told clearly what to do and then left as far as may be to do it in their own way. But if they are being perpetually nagged at you can do nothing with them. Denman knew how to treat them. You knew him well ; and you cannot do better than follow him. Do you accept my offer then ? ”

“ Of course I do, Sir. I know I am very young for it. And I never thought I should be given a chance so soon. But I will do my best, Sir, and I do feel very much the honour you have done me.”

Lee was bursting with pride when the actual announcement appeared in regimental orders that he was appointed Adjutant. He had come out from England determined to make a name for himself ; but at first things had seemed against him. The apathy about military duties and the indifference to their profession among most of the officers in comparison with their enthusiasm for sport had been so chilling he had almost feared at one time he would make no headway against it. Dreams of ever being a Wolseley or a Roberts or a Kitchener seemed to be dissolving away in the cold light of common day. But now hope brightened once more. Now he could hold his head up and be more confident in his bearing.

Well within time he had got his foot firmly on the first rung in the ladder.

And perhaps it was as well that this appointment came when it did. For Lee's mind was very active and enterprising. The ordinary round of regimental life was not fully satisfying to his eager nature. This fortnight in the jungle with Woods had stirred up many a craving in him. His whole nature had begun to reach out in different directions. And there was a danger, therefore, that he might have spread himself out in several lines—running after first one hare and then another according as it started up, but never catching any single one. He might try to be a soldier, a naturalist, a botanist, and an anthropologist, one after another, and never really be one of them. This was the risk to a keenly inquisitive mind like his, curious to know everything there was to know in the wonderful world around him in India.

Fortunately, to check this possible dissipation of effort, came his appointment as Adjutant. He was forced to concentrate his powers. He also had to exercise his will, in order to keep his attention fixed on the matter in hand. And this was excellent discipline for him ; for nothing can be achieved without centring of effort and careful attention. And as Adjutant, with the eyes of the Colonel and of the whole regiment upon him, he would have to keep his mind fixed on his work.

From the moment the Colonel first made him the offer Lee's mind started seething with plans of what he would do. Unlimited possibilities he saw in front of him. The battalion was to become such as no one had ever seen before. If there was a smart battalion anywhere his would be smarter still. But there were two main lines he meant to follow : he wanted to make the battalion feel the majesty of war, and he wanted to make it really fit for battling—trained and prepared for real warfare.

A full-dress parade was to him no mere show. It ought, he held, to have in it the feeling of a religious ceremony. A soldier had to be prepared to give his life for his country at a moment's notice. He had to assume that it was in a good cause that those responsible for directing his country's affairs were asking him to make this sacrifice. And when soldiers were assembled together in a body on a ceremonial occasion they ought to be impressed with the dignity of their calling and the majesty of their country's might. What made Lee furious were the references often made in public speeches, newspapers, and books to soldiers as being hired butchers, almost assassins, and as being hardly less than common murderers. And little better in his eyes was the feeling very common among the poorer people in England that soldiering was a low profession—that a man who had 'gone for a soldier' had gone to the dogs. So he considered the Church parade on Sundays, the King's Birthday parade, and others of that character should be deeply impressive ceremonials. And he wanted all the parade drills, the company inspections, the scrupulous attention to smartness, cleanliness, polish, trimness to lead up to these ceremonials. There might be any amount of fussing about the polish of buttons and buckles and about the exact way of handling the rifle *up* to the great ceremonial parade. But *during* that parade all fussiness should cease, and no man's attention should be taken away from the impressiveness of the occasion. He should be allowed to feel carried up into that bigger whole, the regiment. And the regiment should be made to feel that the country was ever looking to it as her instrument for defence. Lee would not speak about this as he might be accused of sentimentality if he did. And rather than show a trace of sentiment the British officer would infinitely prefer to be considered frivolous and heartless. But

this was the intention in his heart, and he meant to carry it out as opportunity befell.

And corresponding with this was his determination as far as in him lay to fit his battalion for active service. His fortnight in the jungle had greatly influenced him. He must make his battalion as keen and alert and ready as these birds and animals were in the hard competition of life. He must have his men physically fit, with all their wits about them. They must be perfectly trained in the use of the weapon with which they were provided; and they must be taught to act efficiently together to achieve the common end. In this part there would be no room for sentiment. Here the intelligence would have to reign supreme. Though even here sentiment would be in the background and at the foundation, for if a soldier were not animated by love of his country or love of his regiment or pride in himself, he would, when danger was at hand, lie down behind the nearest wall and save his skin. That would be the most *sensible* thing to do. But pride must be there to overrule pure reason: sentiment must be the foundation of the soldier. This much must be allowed. But during the training for active service it must be tucked away in the background, and efficiency alone must be the paramount thought.

These were the two main ideas Lee had in his mind as he took up the adjutancy. In each both sentiment and intelligence had their part. But in the one sentiment was predominant, and in the other intelligence.

But before he definitely took up his work he had some good talks with Hamilton, who, if he was a less enthusiastic soldier than Lee, had a deal of sound common sense and natural sagacity such as Lee needed.

"You'll find the N.C.O.'s will want watching," said Hamilton. "There are a lot of 'old soldiers' among them who will do just as little work as you

will let them ; but with all their grumbling they like being kept up to the mark. A certain amount you'll have to wink at. There was only one thing they didn't like in poor dear old Denman, and that was that having been in the ranks he knew what went on. There are some things that we know very well go on, but which we keep to ourselves. The sergeant-major, for instance, has a useful swallow ; but he turns up as smart as paint on parade, and we pretend we don't know how thirsty he is. They're a good, cheery lot these sergeants. I don't mind how hard I work them while they are on duty. But when they're off duty I like them to enjoy themselves as they please."

This was good, useful advice for Lee to have, for at that time he was so young and enthusiastic and energetic he was inclined to work everyone as hard as he worked himself.

"And the men, too, ought to have their jollifications," continued Hamilton. "They love a good sentimental melodrama at the Regimental Theatre, with the hero just going to be shot against the wall and the heroine dashing up at the last moment, throwing the Union Jack over him and shouting, with her arms extended to heaven, 'Who dares fire on the British flag?' That kind of thing they love—and sing-songs with the latest music-hall songs, when they can shout the choruses. And all this is good for them. They've a rotten dull life of it out here in India. There are no girls to walk out with ; and they can't chuck a chest down the High Street. So it's well to keep them amused in any way we can. If you do that you can wire into them as hard as you like on parade."

Lee took this advice rather lukewarmly at the time, for his mind was set on the work part of his duties. But the sage counsel came in well later, and Lee was thankful to have had it.

But just as Lee was in full swing and getting his most cherished ideas into operation there came a bad set-back. The Colonel, who had from the first taken such interest in him and pushed him along, was promoted to the command of a brigade, and a Colonel who knew not Joseph arrived from the 2nd Battalion to take his place. His name was Jenkins, and he had quite definite ideas of his own as to how a regiment should be run, and those ideas were different from what Colonel Bond and Lee had. He was smart in his way, but it was in the finicky, pipe-clay, and brass-button way. In every detail of his life, both personal and regimental, he was rigidly prim and correct. His life ran like a clock, and like a well-oiled and scrupulously clean clock at that. And he meant the regiment to be a clock too—a piece of perfect mechanism in which the eye of the most inquisitive inspecting General would be unable to find a flaw.

Herein lay the trouble for Lee. For his conception of the regiment was that it should be a living being—and not only a living but a fighting being. A perfect piece of mechanism but something more, even on ceremonial parades. He wanted life and fire besides clockwork mechanism. With his sensitivity he at once detected the bent of the new Colonel's mind, and knew he would have trouble. And it came in full force before many weeks were out.

One day at field manoeuvres the storm broke. The regiment was moving over rough ground to take up position, and it was certainly not moving like a machine, but with considerable speed and like a real live being for all that. There was much apparent though no real disorder, and the Colonel was furious.

" Mr. Lee, Sir," he said, " you have been working the regiment as if we were on active service. We are nothing of the kind. We have the General coming to inspect us, and we must have it orderly. Go to

the rear of the battalion and Captain Jarrett will take your place."

Lee had to obey. But he was livid with suppressed indignation, for he was as sensitive as a girl of his good name in the regiment. He was as jealous of his personal prestige as he was of the prestige of his regiment. Officers have to be. And at orderly room after the field day he told the Colonel that he wished to see him alone. The Colonel dismissed those present, and asked Lee what he wanted.

"I wish, Sir," said Lee, "to see the General. I want to complain to him of your treatment of me."

"What treatment?" asked the Colonel.

"Your disgracing me before the whole regiment by placing Captain Jarrett in my place."

The Colonel was taken aback at first. Then he smiled, and stepping up to Lee patted him on the back, and said in very kindly way:

"Pooh! pooh! my dear Lee. Don't take things too tragically. You are an excellent officer, and I am quite satisfied with you."

And Lee being certain from his manner that he would not dare to treat him so again did not press the matter further. But he never felt with his new Colonel as he had with the old. Colonel Jenkins had none of the true soldier spirit in him: he was a drill-sergeant and nothing more. The saving feature was that he was a gentleman. And now that he and Lee had had it out squarely they were on much better terms.

When Lee told Major Vivian about this encounter, Vivian laughed hugely. "I'm glad it ended up without your having to go to the General," he said. "It's better for us to consume our own smoke. We don't want the General and all the staff to think we have rows in the regiment. But you had a perfect right to go to the General as long as you applied through the commanding officer like you did. And

you would have been justified in going, because the Colonel treated you outrageously : it's the greatest mistake to disgrace an officer in front of his men. Come down on him as hard as you like when he is by himself—but not on parade. That's what I say. But you know, Lee, you're a dreadful impostor.”

“ I, an impostor ! What do you mean ? ”

“ Why, you go about looking as meek and mild as if butter wouldn't melt in your mouth, and then you stand up to the Colonel like this ! ”

“ How could I possibly do anything else ? ” asked Lee.

“ I don't think you could. And I think you managed it very well, and that the Colonel will not mistake his man again as he did this time. But, my boy, take my advice, don't say a word to anyone else about it. Let it all be over and finished, and you'll find things go better in future.”

And Lee did. He found the Colonel much more favourably disposed towards him. An Englishman in authority never minds a subordinate standing up squarely to him. And Lee had respect for authority too much engrained in him to be anything else than respectful to the Colonel after as before this incident. And later he was able to achieve a real diplomatic triumph.

Colonel Jenkins, with all his meticulous care for detail and love of machine-like movement, had none of that sense of majesty on ceremonial parades which Lee thought so important. He had none of the artist in him. In the very midst of a stately movement he would burst out at some irregularity and spoil the whole effect. Lee was as sensible as the Colonel to the irregularity. But to order its correction at that moment was to draw undue attention to it and make it worse still. Lee would shudder to his marrow at the enormity. It was as bad as if a conductor, when a concert was in full swing, was to shout at one of the

orchestra. During rehearsal there might be plenty of correction ; but not at the concert itself.

Most tactfully, therefore, Lee after parade would inform the Colonel of irregularities he had himself noticed, and ask the Colonel if he had observed any others, as he wanted to have them corrected at Adjutant's parade during the week, for he did not like to draw attention to them while the ceremonial parade was on. Gradually Lee weaned the Colonel from his dreadful habit. And a ceremonial parade became a true work of art—a thing of beauty which all who took part in could enjoy. Each would feel the better for having helped to make that beauty ; and all would feel the glow of glory. This same regiment, century after century, had been fighting the battles of England in the old days on the fields of Flanders, later in the sweltering heat of India, when British power was being established, then in the Peninsular War and at Waterloo, and, lastly, in South Africa. The component individuals changed. The dress imperceptibly changed. The fabric of the colours changed. But the regiment remained the same, and the change in the colours was only to add to the number of battles inscribed upon them. And this glory of the regiment all who went to make it could share if they deserved it.

CHAPTER XII

THE MEN'S WELFARE

BUT much off-parade work had to be done besides drills and manœuvres. As a result of Lord Roberts' inspiration a deal more attention was now being paid to the comfort and well-being of the men in their leisure time. Lee had borne in mind Hamilton's advice about helping the men to enjoy themselves, and he now found that the new Colonel was especially strong on providing entertainment for them. Indeed, this was his chief interest. He was no great soldier, and cared nothing for the martial side of regimental life. The barrack-room aspect was more in his line. He liked to look after the everyday life of the men : and this was the best side of him. He had strong fellow-feeling for the men : they were to him human beings rather than soldiers ; and he wanted their life to be clean and wholesome.

"In many ways the men are much better off here in India," he said to Lee one day, "than they are in England. They are better paid and they are not worked so hard, and natives do for them a lot that they would have to do for themselves in England. But without home attractions their life is dreary and depressing and we must do what we can to liven things for them."

"Some counter attraction to that eternal beer-swilling at the canteen is what we want, Sir."

"Yes, and that's not found in a day ; but while

I'm commanding officer I'm going to do what I can, and I look to you to help me, Lee."

The Colonel then referred to a matter which we would all rather shut our eyes to. But we cannot altogether blind ourselves to the brutal side of life. There is no need to dwell on it to excess ; but sincerity does demand that it should not be entirely left out of the picture. There before their eyes was the terrible fact that numbers of able-bodied men were incapacitated for active service through disease contracted from women. This was a serious matter for the commanding officer of a regiment and for an Adjutant so keen as Lee. It was the same throughout the Army in India, and the authorities were determined to deal with it. Colonel Jenkins was wholeheartedly with them. He was not so much thinking of active service as of the human side : it was horrible to him that men should so disfigure their lives. What could be done to prevent it ?

"Men will be men," said the Quartermaster who was also present ; "the doctors must take every precaution against contamination. But that's all we can do. We can't prevent intercourse. That's part of human nature."

This was the theory common amongst both officers and men. But Colonel Jenkins did not hold with it.

"I can quote high medical authority against that view," he said ; "intercourse is *not* a necessity. A man may have a hard struggle to refrain when temptation is placed right under his eyes. But the real *man* is the one who contains himself not the one who yields. We're playing the very devil if we lead men to think that yielding is manly. We must get rid of that pernicious idea. There's no physical necessity in the case. Containing themselves will be a very good discipline for them. They'll be all the better for it. I won't have my men defiling themselves. And I want you to look to it, Lee. You're

always thinking of active service, and you can see how serious it is if we have to leave fifty or sixty men behind."

"What would you specially like me to do, Sir?"

"For one thing take every opportunity of getting out of the men's heads—and the officers' too, for that matter—that there's anything necessary in this. Tell them the manly thing is to keep themselves in. Any beast can let himself go. And besides that keep the men's minds occupied, and find them plenty of scope for their masculine energies."

Lee privately thought that what the men *most* wanted was something to keep the influence of home and religion strong in them. Every mother must be yearning that her own son should keep himself uncontaminated. And a son should think of his mother's feelings and of all she has gone through to bring him up. He should loathe to tarnish his purity. And besides this there should be as much care taken to keep his soul unspotted from the world as there is to keep his uniform and accoutrements clean. If religion could see to keeping his soul unspotted, his soul would keep his body pure. This was the root of the matter, Lee thought, but he was shy to say so to a man so much older than himself; and perhaps the Colonel himself did realise it. So he simply asked the Colonel if there was any particular action he wished taken.

"Yes, I want you to interest Tennington in the matter. He has not been with us long, but I've noted him particularly. He is full of go, and he has a good way with the men. He was brought up in the stables and with gamekeepers and such-like and knows how to deal with them. Get hold of Tennington and work him."

"Tiger Tennington. Yes—he'd be first rate. We call him Tiger because he's a very tiger at anything he takes up."

“ Well, tell him to work up the men’s games and sport of all kinds, and theatricals, sing-songs, and all the rest of it. And you may give him a hint that if he’ll put his back into this he will catch my eye pretty easily when he wants leave. I know he’s incessantly wanting to be off shooting or playing polo, and I’m quite willing to be generous in the way of leave if, while he’s with the regiment, he’ll give a good deal of his time to the men.”

Tennington was informed of the Colonel’s wishes, and he forthwith entered headlong into the idea.

“ I quite see the Colonel’s point. It’s excellent. And the men are such good fellows it’s a shame not to look after them. All right, let’s make things hum. We already have a cricket club and a regimental theatre, let’s go ahead on these and have football, races, boxing, and all kinds of amusements. We’d better have a Dramatic Club and an Athletic Club for the whole crowd. I can do the theatre part, and I’ll get the Kid to work up the boxing—the men love that. And we must get someone else to do the coursing—that’s another sport the men like—anything to do with dogs. And what about a regimental paper. Many regiments have them, and we could put a lot of chaff into it and make it lively.”

“ A splendid idea,” said Lee ; “ what shall we call it ? *Devonshire Cider* ? ”

“ Certainly not. Call it *Devonshire Cream*, because it’ll contain the cream of the fun in the Devonshire Light Infantry.”

“ First rate,” said Lee, “ we couldn’t have a better.”

“ I’ll write all the skits and nonsense,” continued Tennington, “ and you shall preserve the solemnities and write articles on the old history of the regiment and give the regimental news. I’ll chuck polo and shooting and everything else, and give myself up to this job. It’s a real good business, and I should like

to do it well. We'll liven up the whole place. I'll see Sergeant Barry about the Regimental Theatre. He was in the theatrical line himself at one time and runs the theatre fairly well, but we must be getting it going stronger still, and get hold of all the talent there is in the regiment and form a regular Dramatic Club. And I can easily write some rubbishy play which will make them laugh. And we'll have some sing-songs too with the latest music-hall songs and some very sentimental ones."

Lee felt fairly swept off his feet, but that was Tiger Tennington's way. He was like a whirlwind. When he took up a thing he flung the whole of himself into it and was irresistible. And he did not drop it as quickly as he had taken it up: he saw it through.

" Well, you go ahead, Tiger. I shall not be able to take much active part," said Lee, " as I'm too full up already with drills and office work; but I'll make things easy for you with the men. I'll make those who disgrace themselves do all the dirty work of the regiment and I'll be lenient about drill with those who add to the gaiety of nations."

Tennington then set to work, and he was exactly the man for the job. He was about five foot ten high. His face was as ugly as his body was beautiful, for he was perfectly proportioned and always in the pink of condition. But there was power and intellect in his face, and it was one of those which make you at home with it directly you see it. You could talk to Tennington immediately you saw him. And fond as he was of sport and of games of most kinds he was a cultivated man as well. He had made his mark at Cambridge, and had a turn for acting and writing.

A fortnight later he came to Lee and said: " I'm trying to get the men to manage things for themselves. The Colonel and you and I will give them the lead and stimulus; but if they can feel it's their own

job they'll pitch into it. Sergeant Barry is a regular clinker, and has been ferreting about in the regiment and found some tip-top men. He and I have been concocting a screaming farce—very topical—with a hit at every one. And we want to have a great night at the theatre and get the General there and the whole station. I promise you it'll be a success. Then I'm plugging away at the Athletic Club too. I tell the men they must all do something or other. They must either play football or cricket, or act or sing. And those who can't do anything else must do extra clapping and shouting. They must all play up and make things go."

"I wish to heavens I had your way with the men, Tiger. You're a stunner. They'll do anything for you."

"Oh, that's easy enough: I like them," said Tennington, "they're the best fellows going. All I have to do is to sort them out and discover who can do which things best; then I set them to do it. I promise you we shall have the men's time occupied all right! The Colonel need have no fear on that point."

"No, indeed," said Lee, "things'll soon be fizzing."

In due course all was ready. The announcements had been sent out. Tennington and two other subalterns went round the station as sandwich men with ridiculous placards he had printed. They paraded before the Club, and they went to the General's and Commissioner's. They roped in everybody—the General and the General's wife and the General's daughter—the Commissioner and the Commissioner's wife and the Commissioner's daughter—all were compelled to come in.

The play was a tearing success. The Colonel was taken off as a benevolent ogre—Lee as the Duke of Wellington. No one was spared. The men roared with laughter. And at the end there were shouts for

the author, and Tennington appeared, pretending not to understand what the laughing had been about. "The Colonel is an ogre," he said; "all Colonels have to be! Generals wouldn't approve of them if they weren't. And Mr. Lee *does* resemble the Duke of Wellington: all Adjutants have to or the Colonels would soon have them out."

Following the speech were calls for the ladies of the piece—little varmint of drummer boys—and preposterous bouquets were thrown to them. Everyone enjoyed himself; and the Colonel told Tennington he was a treasure.

The production of the paper next absorbed the Tiger's attention. Ways and means were discussed: and, encouraged by the success of the play, the Colonel and officers subscribed liberally.

"I'll make it full of bite," he said. "I want it to grip the men. There'll be lots of fun and lots of sentiment, but we won't be funny and we won't be sentimental."

Eventually the paper appeared with its emblem: a bowl of Devonshire Cream; and its motto: "Cream of the Cream." Easily recognisable nicknames were given to prominent figures in the regiment, and their doings—with embellishments—were recorded. Expert appreciations of local sporting events were given. Lee contributed the first of a series of articles on the history of the Regiment. And there was a letter—also the first of a series—from Devonshire, giving an account of doings there and descriptions of well-known localities.

And while he had been working at the Dramatic Club and the paper Tennington had also been keeping his eye on the Athletic Club. More life was put into the cricket and football matches. They were made more of events: a luncheon tent was put up and the officers and officers' wives were whipped up to look on. Regimental sports were held, too, and gym-

khanas with competitions which both required skill and afforded amusement.

But where the Tiger scored his biggest success was in a boxing competition. It was open to the whole station, officers and men, including the artillery, the York Fusiliers, officers in the Indian regiments, and men in railway workshops. Among the subalterns who had recently joined the Devonshire Light Infantry was one named Childs, who was promptly nicknamed the Kid. He was a fine boxer, and Tennington got him to train hard for the competition. "He can hit like sin," the Tiger told Lee, "and has the pluck of the devil: he'll take any amount of punishment, and if he can fairly get in his blow he will knock out pretty well anyone here."

The great match was between the Kid and an officer in the York Fusiliers—a good deal heavier man. The Kid was knocked down twice, and each time was fairly dazed by the terrific blows. But he just managed to recover before time was up. And after the second blow he fought with a curious confidence. He seemed to know he now had the mastery. He knew what to avoid, and he knew how to get in his own blow; and he got it in. He got it in with the whole of his body behind it and knocked his opponent clean out. The men went off their heads with delight. They yelled and cheered and threw their hats up in the air; and the Kid was at once the hero of the regiment.

"You've worked like a nigger and livened up the whole regiment," said Lee to the Tiger next day; "the men are now full of buck, and the Colonel is delighted. But you can't go on for ever at this pace. Why not take some leave. The Colonel would give it like a shot."

"To tell the truth I do rather hanker after a shoot. I want to kill a beast of some kind, so if you think the Colonel won't mind I'll put in for two months' leave," said Tennington.

" That'll be all right," said Lee, " but if you want a tiger have a talk with Woods, the Forest Officer. It's lucky I had him in to see this fight, and he's the man to help you."

The two took to each other straight off, for Tennington was a natural sportsman, and spoke the language of sportsmen, and at the end of the week's visit Tennington went off with Woods for a holiday he had thoroughly earned.

So the months slipped away speeded by work and speeded by play, and Lee felt the time had come when he might well ask for three months' leave. Work would be slack during the hot weather, and he yearned for home. Greatly daring he approached the Colonel : he did not wish it if the work would suffer in any way, but if he could be spared he would like to have leave from April 15th till July 15th. The Colonel agreed at once. " You've worked hard," he said, " and never spared yourself and leave home will do you good."

Long pent-up feelings began springing up within him as leave was now certain. Then only did he realise how greatly he had been longing for it. All life was at once lighter and easier and rosier. He wrote off home telling them the great news. He began preparations for the journey, winding up all necessary work, and before he hardly knew it he was on his way to Bombay.

CHAPTER XIII

LEAVE HOME

FOR long Lee had looked forward to the time when he would be on an English ship and homeward bound. Now the great moment had come. He had seen his baggage off from the hotel, descended the steps of the Apollo Bunder, stepped on to a launch, been carried across the beautiful Bombay harbour shimmering in the radiant sunshine, and at length he actually stood on the deck of the P. and O. It was a heavenly sensation. There was a touch of England already, with the ship's officers busy at their duties, and stewards looking after the baggage and showing the passengers to their cabins, and the chief steward arranging the places at the dinner-table. Then came a great clanging of the bell and shouts down the deck of "Anyone more for the shore." The last of the Indian servants and shipping agents were bundled off into the launches and boats. The anchor was hauled up. Signal bells rang from the bridge: the screw began to turn, stirring up muddy water in the stern. Slowly the great ship began to move. The speed increased and increased. The landing steps, the great hotels, the Yacht Club, the High Court, and the Railway Terminus slowly receded. The Colaba Lighthouse followed. All of India that was left was a line of hazy purple hills merging into the dreamy blue of the sky. Then that, too, was gone—India was now far away, and the ship was forging ahead for home.

All were not in such high spirits as Lee, for all were not young subalterns on their first leave home. But most on board were happy : they had well earned the holiday before them. And even the globe-trotters were in spirits : they had had a good time in India, and now the heat had begun they were glad enough to be returning home. Delicious lazy days followed. The Indian Ocean was like a mill pond. The weather was not too hot. And with the wind which the ship made it was cool enough, and one could sit on deck and feel life good. The food also was good. Fastidious globe-trotters grumbled at it, and probably it was not as good as it might have been. But there were English chops—about three times the size of any Indian chop—and there was English butter ; and the whole smell and taste and feel of the food was English : it was clean and you could trust it.

The heat of Aden and the Red Sea was soon passed. By the time Suez was reached punkahs were no longer necessary. And in the Mediterranean there was real substance and revivifying freshness in the air. Europe at last came in sight, and at Brindisi Lee managed to scramble into a boat from the shore ahead of the other passengers, rush the Customs officials, and just catch an express train two hours ahead of the P. and O. special. All was now new and exciting, and he did not miss a thing as he passed through Italy and France. The people in the carriage, on the platforms, or in the fields ; the houses, the villages, the towns, the trees, the rivers, the mountains, all were noted by his greedy eyes. He enjoyed every minute of two whole days' journey across the Continent. And then came the intoxicating moment of his actual arrival in England—those white cliffs of Dover, so often seen but now bringing his heart right up to his mouth. And the landing at Dover and the obliging English porters to whom he would cheerfully have emptied his pockets. Then followed that

wonderful journey through Kent in the early morning of a full spring day—the greatest marvel of all : the whole country like a garden, fields and hedges all so trim and neat, the beech trees in their tenderest truest greenery, and banks of primroses and violets. There it all was—almost absurdly true—and horses and cattle and sheep, ridiculously large for the landscape—the hills so tiny and the animals so big. And now he was in matter-of-fact London, going about its business as usual, and quite indifferent to young subalterns returning for their first leave from distant parts of the Empire. Another rush to just catch another train ; and before the Indian mail letters had arrived Lee was in his home.

Never had he forgotten the intensity of his dear mother's parting embrace when he left for India, but even more wonderful was the way she folded him to her when he returned. She, so undemonstrative and gentle : he could never have believed the power and the tenderness with which she enfolded him. And the pride with which she looked at him, and the sweet smile which came through the tears of joy she *could* not keep back. And his dear old father's pride too, and his deep warm affection. And Miss Lee's almost overpowering hug. All these were very nearly too much for Evan. And for a day or two they thought him more silent than before ; and he was, of course, looking older and more manly than when he left them as a boy. But they knew that in affection for his home he had not changed. And in a day or two his tongue began to loosen.

"What I notice," he said to his father, "is the cleanness and freshness of everything here, and the kindness of people. They seem so glad to see one, and everyone has something kind to say. And people seem so thorough and sincere—and so gentle too. It all seems cotton-woolly though—rather too soft ; and I think I should miss the spaciousness

and adventure of life in India if I stayed here long."

"Well, you must enjoy yourself while you're here, my boy. A good holiday will do you no harm. We must freshen you up. You mustn't always be thinking about the Army. Give it a rest."

Every kind of amusement was accordingly arranged for Evan—tennis parties, dances, boating, picnics—everything.

But Lee had visits to pay, too, and, as soon as he could, he went off to Newford to see his old aunt. Not one atom had she changed. The same old bonnet, the same cloak, the same dress, and the same warm welcome. Just before dinner she took Lee aside, and in a whisper said :

"Which would you like to drink, dear boy, beer or port ? I have both."

"My dear old aunt, what *are* you doing ? You used to be such a strict teetotaler."

"So I am still. But you must have just what you like ; only I don't know what you young men drink."

Lee was deeply touched. He knew well that for years she had preached teetotalism ; and never before had beer or wine been in her house. But the dear old lady would be hospitable above all things. Her nephew from India must have of the best she could give. Here, indeed, was hospitality ; and she was real good company too. She lived the seemingly narrow life of a tiny village ; yet she knew life better, far, than most of those who live in the great world ever come to know it. She knew only a few people, but those few she knew *au fond*. She had known their parents ; and themselves she had known since childhood. And she was known by everybody. And this close touch with many lives had made her very human. Lee had seen her severe, but he had never seen her angry. Once, indeed, her mood did suddenly

change to great gravity. The conversation had somehow come round to hell, and Lee had said ;

“ Well, dear old Aunt, anyhow there’s no chance of *your* going to hell.”

Whereupon she replied with grave conviction :

“ I am *certain* to go there. I am far too bad to go anywhere else.”

It was a revelation to Lee. If ever there was a good woman his aunt was that woman. Her whole life had been spent in doing good. She devoted herself to the poor. Every penny she could spare she spent upon the village. Her brothers were afraid to send her money, because it passed through her fingers straight off to someone else. She trained young men to be missionaries. She taught in the Sunday-school. She was the best friend of everyone, rich and poor. And yet so exalted was her standard of good that she did literally believe she was a poor miserable sinner and must go to hell.

This was astonishing enough to Lee ; but what was even more remarkable was that it didn’t have the effect of making her morose. No one he knew was more unfailingly cheerful. And she had a great head and a great heart ; and there were very many besides Lee whose lives she had influenced in a big, strong manful way. And I say manful because she had more of the strength and severity of a man than the grace of a woman. Yet strict and severe though she was, everyone not only respected but loved her. She had not an enemy in the world. All knew that if she were severe with others she was ten times as hard on herself. There was nothing she would ask others to do that she had not already done herself, and was not prepared to do again.

From Newford Lee went on to Oxford to see Truman. He had already heard that Truman had won a First in Greats, and was highly thought of at Oxford ; and he wanted to see his old school friend

again. They had never corresponded ; for boys are not much given to writing letters. But Lee had complete confidence that they would take up their friendship exactly where it was. He found Truman in cosy rooms at Old College, and directly they met they talked together as if they had never parted. Towards everyone in India Lee had felt some slight restraint : towards Truman there was none. Not only had he been a boy-friend, but down at bottom there was much more in common between him and Truman than there was between him and any of his brother officers. And to Lee there came a most satisfying relief as he let himself go right out to the full.

" You're just the same as ever," said Truman, " and I don't believe you'll really alter if you live to be a hundred : only you look more martial than you used to. It's that moustache of yours. How do you like India and the regiment and everything ? Are you still as keen as ever on Napier's *Peninsular War* and Wellington ? "

" Wellington is still going strong," replied Lee, " but Wolseley and Roberts are beginning to run him close. India is ripping, and I wouldn't be anything else than a soldier for all you could give me. The Army suits me down to the ground. And I was lucky enough to get the adjutancy of my battalion, and that gives me a lot of interesting work and means a great deal for me in the future."

" What a wonderful life you have. Here have I been mugging away at books at Oxford for four years while you've been right out in the world seeing India, running a regiment, handling live men."

" I *am* fortunate in that way ; but I wouldn't half mind some of your life as well," said Lee. " I've begun to read a bit now—I mean other books besides military—and I could do with a year or two here right in the middle of intellectual things. And what

do you mean to do, Eddie? Are you going in for music, or literature, or the Church? You might be anything."

"I had thought at one time of going into the Church," said Truman. "You remember how much I used to care for religion, and I should like to have given my life to it. And so I hope I shall; but not in the Ministry. I kick against being tied down by the set creeds and articles of the Church. I don't disagree with the deep essentials, though even with them I see that we have to be digging deeper still, and I suppose always shall. But I like to preserve my freedom till I've thought things out well; and I believe I shall be able to do more good for religion as a layman than as a minister. The ministers seem to me to be too much like the permanent officials in a Government office. You expect of them to keep the institution going; but the initiative and enterprise you expect to come from the general body of members."

"Certainly most great religious movements have sprung from the laity, haven't they? But what do you propose to do?" asked Lee.

"I mean to go in for philosophy. In working for Greats we had to take up philosophy, and I was fascinated by its breadth and bigness; and its fearless sincerity. And it didn't appear to me to go against religion, but to clear it. I have a tutorship at present. But I hope very soon to be a lecturer in philosophy. I like the idea of being able to influence the lives of the coming men—and about the ablest here. I shall probably soon be made a Fellow of some College, and have the opportunity of meeting leading men. I shall keep freshened up by always being in touch with young men. I shall be in the midst of the intellectual life of England, and shall have opportunities of testing my ideas against the best minds."

" What a splendid life you'll have. Almost thou persuadest me to be a philosopher. But tell me isn't philosophy fearfully dry and stiff? I'm a desperately ignorant fellow, and it's rather beyond me as far as I've read of it."

" Yes, it is stiff. It is all tough, close reasoning. It aims at the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth; and the best of it is that there's no sham or make-believe about it. And you question everything: you are not bound to accept anything on authority. The result is that when you do form an opinion you hold it very firmly until someone shows it to be untenable; and then you hold it in a revised and deeper and truer form."

" And what about your music, Eddie? You used to be devoted to music, and so good at it. You're not letting that go, are you?"

" Music! Music is a passion with me. I can't describe what it is to me. But I had to concentrate on one thing, so I decided to put the emphasis on philosophy. I wanted to get at the real nature of things."

" I wish you could have been with me during a fortnight I spent in the jungles with a Forest Officer called Woods. *He* would have put you in touch with the nature of things. There we were bang up against realities. We saw life on the raw, and saw it in epitome too, for there the whole of life was represented: civilised man, primitive man, animals, plants, trees, stars—everything. And what would have interested you was that Woods, though he spent all his life in direct contact with nature, did not have the 'red in tooth and claw' view. Nature was not simply cruel and callous: she was terribly stern in her discipline, but good resulted from it. What chiefly impressed Woods about the forest life was not its cruelty, but its joy and beauty. He loved it."

" We ought to have him here, then," said Truman,

“for we have some terribly gloomy old things in Oxford who want cheering up. Nature to them is not only cruel, but horribly prodigal and wasteful. And the talk about the order in nature is all rubbish, they say: she is most infernally disorderly. However, between you and me I have a tiny suspicion that they're a bit out of touch with real life, and would be all the better for experience like you've had. It would open their minds a lot.”

“I'm glad you think so. But you've no idea what a freshener it is to come home. I've been just staying with a dear old aunt. She has an enormously high standard, and as she doesn't come up to it, she thinks herself a great sinner and doomed to go to hell. One smiles. But it is people like her we miss in India—people who do have the root of religion in them.”

“But she is perfectly right, Evan, in having the loftiest standard to condemn herself by. We all ought to have one—and apply it hard. The mistake she makes is in taking the whole responsibility on herself. The creature does not have the whole responsibility. At least half must be with the Creator. All that could be reasonably expected of her is that she should make the most of her capacities.”

“I am sure she does that much,” said Lee, “for she simply gives her whole life to work in the village.”

“Very well, then, the Creator will play *His* part. The Creative Power is a *redeeming* Power. And if by her subsequent life she makes up for past wrongs she will have the whole purifying Power of the world behind her. The Creator is always behind the creature in redeeming confessed sins. If we recognise how heinous are our sins, truly repent of them, and determine to make up for them by leading a better life in future we shall have the whole redemptive Power of creation with us. That is how I look at it, Evan.”

"Yes, I suppose it is like that," said Lee, "but you would hardly believe how narrow in some ways the old dear's religion is. She is so wonderfully good I hardly like to speak like that of her. But the narrowness does strike me. Everyone who isn't a Christian she classes with 'Jews, Turks, infidels, and heretics' as heathen who are doomed to be damned. And, poor old lady, she spends every penny she can spare from her village to give to a missionary society for converting these unfortunate heathen, and so saving them from damnation. Yet she never speaks an intolerant word about these others. She merely thinks that they have had the bad fortune to miss something that she has been favoured with, and she wants to share her fortune with them. She is a living witness to the good of religion."

"She must be a very remarkable woman," said Truman.

"She is, indeed. She's worth a dozen ordinary men. The biggest would feel humble beside her. A man with far wider intellectual range would feel his spiritual inferiority. He would realise he hadn't approached anything like so closely as she had to the real essence of things. All the same, I wish a religion such as hers had greater breadth. Coming back from India I don't like to hear Hindus and Mohamedans classed as heathen. I would like all that wonderful good in her religion kept secure, but to find a broader outlook."

"That'll come all right, Evan. Don't worry yourself. Narrowness was required at first to get depth. Once that is obtained widening will come of itself. For intensity brings extensity. The intensive life is the extensive life in the long run."

"Don't you find your music helps you here, Eddie. Music appeals very deeply to me, but it also makes one expand without limit. One seems much broader in music than anywhere else. And if it has that

effect on an unmusical fellow like me I don't know what it can have on you."

"Yes, indeed, it does have that effect on me. And we can hear and say things in music that we can't possibly put down in writing. Sometimes I can hardly keep myself back from abandoning philosophy and taking to music, for that very reason. But philosophy has music in it, too. The more I study the fundamental nature of things the more convinced I am that the world is musical at bottom. At the base of things there is rhythm. And there is music at the top too. When we're at the very top of ourselves we burst into song—just like the birds. The world is music all through. It is a vast symphony—without beginning and without end, rolling on for ever. And all take their part even if only as listeners cheering the players, while the master musicians in turn give the lead. I'm going to see if I can make anything of philosophy on that line."

"Splendid, Eddie! And will you write a book?"

"Yes: we're generally expected to write. And to you, Evan, I may say in confidence that I want to write a book which will be a big power and influence among men. I've always had a facility for scribbling, but so far have had nothing worth expressing. I've written poems on all the stock subjects, but there's been nothing really in them. However, writing them has given me practice; and when I do write my book I hope I shall get away from the stodgy type of philosophical book, and write one which will be a work of art and appeal universally."

"How perfectly glorious! You have it in you, Eddie, I know. And I'm delighted to find you have an ambition worthy of you."

"Don't go talking about it, though. I only say this to you. It would never do for me to be saying I am going to cut out Plato and Shakespeare combined."

"No. It doesn't do to say so. But I'm glad you're going to try to. I do envy you your gifts. I feel so dreadfully wooden and leaden in comparison."

"And what about me? Don't you think I envy you your physique and your courage and your practical opportunities. You'll be a great national hero one day."

"Very well, we'll envy each other!"

When Lee returned home from his visits his mother was specially anxious to hear how Evan and Truman had got on together. "Has he been spoilt by his success," she asked, "or is he still as unconscious as ever how clever he is?"

"He's just the same—just as simple as he always was. He's so clear-eyed and fresh too. He's never solemn, but as jolly when he's serious as when he frivols. Some of these undergraduates put on airs of insufferable superiority; but there's nothing of this about *him*. I could talk to him exactly the same as I used to—far more easily than to anyone else—and he talked to me just as freely. And all comes bubbling out of him as naturally as from a spring: it was a treat to listen to him."

Mrs. Lee was overjoyed that her son should have kept up this friendship. She had from the first admired Truman. He was exactly the refined gentle spirit she would most like her precious boy to consort with. But there was just a shade of disappointment when she heard that he was going to be a philosopher.

"He must be the best judge," she said, "but I do wish that he had gone into the Church. He seems to me so beautifully fitted for the holy ministration; and the Church ought to have the very best. And the very best ought to go into the Church. I know nothing about philosophy. I only know the old truths. They have served me all my life; and I want no better. Jesus is everything to me. I'm just a little disappointed that Truman should give

his whole life up to philosophy when he might have been a minister of religion. And if he could not have been a clergyman I would almost wish he had taken up music. He might have been a Bach or Handel of modern times. Philosophy seems so dry and unimportant in comparison."

"It won't be with him," said Lee, "he'll infuse it with colour. It's all cold white light at present, he says, but he means to make it glow like the sunrise. And I think he'll do more than that: he'll bring the light of philosophy into religion. I believe that is what he's really aiming at. And it'll be a tremendous thing for the men of the present day."

"Well, I hope it will," said Mrs. Lee, "but I like to cling to the beautiful old truths which I've always had, and which my dear mother had before me."

And when Lee thought of his mother and of what he knew of her mother, and when he remembered his aunt and his dear old father and what these old truths had been in *their* lives, he saw that there must be something very, very precious there which must be by every means preserved. As he rubbed about in the world, and as he read articles in magazines and newspapers, doubts were beginning to grow upon him as to the literal truth of many things he had been taught in his boyhood. But in discarding much he must be careful, he saw, not to fling aside some priceless treasure. In rejecting the shell he must beware of throwing away the kernel as well.

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Lee talked like this in his home and to Truman about things which concerned him most deeply. But of one matter and that the one he had most at heart he spoke not at all—not even to Truman, and least of all to his mother and sister. Miss Denver he never mentioned. For all he said about her she might never have existed. And yet it was of her

he was most thinking all the time. Such conduct sounds perfidious : in reality this concealment was due to fear of sacrilege. To him his love was so sacred he quivered at the least breath on it. So he would not run the risk of exposure. Not till his love was returned would he reveal what was in him. About all else he would let his heart go out as he had not been able so to loosen it for four long years. But about this not a word.

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The six weeks in England flew by. He made the most of every minute of them. But almost before he had settled down he had to leave again. Miss Lee had grudged each hour he had been away from home on the few visits he felt he had to pay. Still she knew she could not absolutely tie him to her. And when she had him in the home she devoted every minute to him. He was her idol, and more precious to her than ever. If it had been possible she would have gone out to India with him : that was her dream. But it could not be : her place was with her parents ; and Lee had to carve out his own way.

The parting was a wrench again. Such partings where love so fills the home must always be a fearful strain. But the wrench was not so agonising as before. Lee now knew what he was going to. And the time would soon be coming when he could take a longer furlough home. Also the voyage out was very different from his first voyage. Then he was terribly lonely, and all was strange before him. Now there were plenty of passengers, and among them several he knew. And he was returning full of schemes of what he meant to do. In England he had not only breathed the fresh invigorating air and eaten the rich substantial food of home, he had also renewed the right spirit within him. He had more heart in him and was fuller of purpose.

It was on this voyage that I first met him. By a kind fate I was seated next to him at meals, and we gradually came to know each other. He was then slight and very active; rather silent and pensive as a rule, but full of talk as we paced up and down the deck together; and it was on these constitutionals that I got to know him. I was a subaltern in a regiment of the old Punjab Frontier Force, and he was keenly interested in the frontier life, though I think that even then he was beginning to interest himself in those deep problems which are the foundation of every kind of life—frontier or any other. Reading occupied much of his time on board. He would tuck himself away in a corner of the saloon, where he could be more free of interruptions than he would be on deck; and there he would bury himself in abstruse books far beyond me—and beyond him, too, I fancy, though he liked reading them. One especially he worked at. It was called *The Reality of Appearance*, or some such name. It had recently come out, and Truman had specially recommended it to him as a masterpiece.

“It’s uncommonly stiff reading,” he confessed to me, “but there’s real grit in it. It’s not that soapy stuff that some religious books are made of. It’s solid granite, and I like to bite upon it: it sharpens my teeth. It’s big, too, and fundamental. And I’m beginning to feel I know something about the world. It’s very odd, we hardly think about this world all round us; we take it for granted, and scarcely even think what it really is down at bottom. But this book does. And when every now and then I come across a page that I can understand, it’s most fascinating. And luckily the main conclusions are put quite clearly and definitely.”

We had a cheery voyage out, and Lee seemed almost as glad to get back to India as he had been to leave it. He wanted to get hard down to work

again and bring his ideas into effect. We had made considerable friends on board ship, but we scarcely expected to meet each other much in India, and certainly I little dreamed I should one day be writing his "Life." What I did feel certain of, though, was that he would make a big name for himself. I could see he was in dead earnest; and he was quite out of the ordinary run. I did not look upon him as a genius in the same way as he looked upon Truman. But I felt certain that if ever the chance of distinguishing himself came he would rise to the occasion and show the stuff that was in him.

CHAPTER XIV

PARADISE REVISITED

ANOTHER clammy sweltering time in the rains Lee had to endure as best he could on his return to the regiment. And then a strenuous cold weather of drills and inspection and the usual cantonment festivities and much entertainment provided by the Dramatic and Athletic Clubs, for Tiger Tennington was in full swing. Following this came another soul-sapping, body-wearing hot weather. But for the month at the end, just as the rains were over, Lee managed to get a month's leave and dashed off to the "hills" as they are called in India. It was his first sight of the Himalaya, and he gave a great gulp as he realised that what he saw was really part of earth. Making his headquarters at one of the bungalows on the road from Simla towards Tibet he took a *shikari* and a cook and went off on little expeditions in the mountains round, sleeping on the ground in the open in order to get the full out of them. Magnificent forests of deodar and spruce covered the lower part of the mountains. Higher up grew birches. And above them rose bare splendid crags, the home of wild goat and sheep. From there he would look down thousands of feet into tremendous gorges through which the Sutlej forced its way, cutting clean through the Himalaya in its course from Tibet to India. Then beyond the river, and rising 17,000 feet above it was a line of jagged snowy peaks. Perpetual sunshine reigned day after day now the

monsoon was over. The sky was of the clearest blue. There was a sharp fresh nip in the air. And at night he used to delight in sleeping beneath the stars. Here in the midst of the mountains he wanted to feel in closest possible touch with Nature.

He returned to the regiment refreshed in body and in spirit. The cold weather drill season passed much the same as others. And in the following hot weather by a strange fatality he was appointed to act for a couple of months in a staff appointment at Tirich. Through the years which had passed since he was there last his love had never been forgotten, and he shrank from going there again, for he had not arrived at a position in which he could afford to marry, and could not, therefore, speak of his love. And he shrank still more when Mrs. Denver invited him to stay with them while he was at Tirich ; and at first he made excuse. But when she hospitably pressed him he could not resist, and finally accepted.

At first there was restraint between him and Miss Denver. He could not be with her as he had been in the first joyous days before he had ever dreamed of love. And he knew nothing of whether or not she had been thinking of him as he had been thinking of her. He thought he was bound to keep himself in as if there were nothing between them. And he remained stiff and stilted. But gradually the restraint between them grew less. He had to be in the staff office for most of the day, but he would often ride with Miss Denver. Every afternoon there would be tennis, either at her home or with someone else, and in the evening there would be people to dinner or singing or reading. It was never quite the same as in the original innocent childlike time four years before ; but Lee felt happier than he had ever thought possible. He found the more to admire in Miss Denver the more he saw of her in her home ; and what still attracted him was what had drawn her to

him from the first—her power of love : he saw how much she loved all those about her ; he saw how staunch she was in her loves and how deeply devoted to her those about her were ; and he thought if he could gain that love how sweet that love would be. With such a love as Nina had to give no man could wish for more.

It was hard, while he was living under the same roof, to keep cool towards her ; and he did try sometimes to let her see that he was not wholly indifferent. And now and then he thought she understood him : sometimes she seemed to show him a little regard—not much, but still enough to make him think that down in her heart she did care for him ; and he feared that if he for a moment doubted her he would, when he at last told her of his love, deeply regret his lack of faith.

But he remained firm in his resolve not to speak to her as yet : he was still only a subaltern, and the time had not yet come when he might tell her of his love.

Lee went on, therefore, enjoying his life with the Denvers, feeling happier every day. Next year he would have his promotion, and be able to come back and ask her to be his wife ; and he would picture to himself how she would then tell him that she, too, had loved him all these years, and thought of him while he was away working to make himself a position, and how they would close in one another, never to be parted again.

Six weeks went by like this and Lee was supremely happy. Then quite suddenly, as on his first visit, Miss Denver went away to the Temperleys and the joy at once went out of his life. Again on the Sunday Lee went to the evening service to see her ; but it was not the same now as on that happy Sunday four years before : then rightly or wrongly he was convinced that some of his love was returned ; now there

was more restraint than there had been of late between them—an unexpected coldness.

Lee could not make out what had occurred ; but the next morning Mrs. Temperley met him, and taking him by the arm asked whether she was not right in thinking that he loved Miss Denver. “I have thought very anxiously,” she said, “whether I ought to speak to you about her, and last evening when we met after church I had almost made up my mind to ; but I decided I wouldn’t. Then during the night I thought it all over, and came to the conclusion that both in her interests and in yours it would be best for me to speak to you and at once, and ask how matters stood between you. It is a great responsibility ; but Nina is a dear girl and I love her ; and I am very fond of you, and I felt I must do my best for you both.”

When Lee heard Miss Denver’s dear and intimate friend speaking like that all his love came welling up without control. With no one else had he been able to speak a word about it : at last he could confess his pent-up love which he had kept to himself for four long years.

“I’ve loved her from the very first,” he said. “I loved her that first time I was here ; and I have loved her ever since. The only reason I haven’t told her of it is that I’ve been waiting till I’m in a position to ask her to be my wife.”

“I felt certain you did,” said Mrs. Temperley. “But I must be perfectly frank with you. People have begun to talk about Nina and you being together so much ; and some have even asked her whether she’s engaged to you—you know how people talk in a small place like this ; and it was on this account that she suddenly came away to us. You ought to know, too, that there has been an attachment between Nina and another man. He has been away for two years now, and perhaps she thinks no more of him ;

but I can't say : I only know she was very attracted to him when he was here."

Once he had begun talking about what had been on his heart for so long he was surging with emotion : his eyes filled with tears ; and his voice seemed to come from depths he had not known before, and to be both stronger and more tender than he had ever heard it. He at once decided that he would no longer delay letting Miss Denver know of his love. He saw Mrs. Denver, and, as Mrs. Temperley had told him, she was even more anxious than Mrs. Temperley about the matter. It was agreed that Mrs. Temperley was to tell Miss Denver exactly what Evan's position was—how he had always loved her, but could not speak till he was in a position to marry. And she was, as delicately as she could, to find out how Miss Denver felt towards Evan. The result she was to communicate to Lee when he came back from office the next afternoon. All through the office hours he scarcely knew what to do with himself : he was all seething within, and could scarcely contain himself. He dared not hope that she would return his love as fully as he had given his to her ; but he thought she would be able to return some little of it ; and he never expected for a moment that she would reject it altogether. And there was the possibility—the hope—that what he had longed for all these years would happen, and that she would reply that all through she had loved him as he had loved her. His mind dwelt first on one possibility then on another, and he thought of every ground for believing in the one or the other.

He hurried back as soon as ever he could get away from office, and found Mrs. Temperley waiting in the hall.

She said that Miss Denver had spoken very gently and considerately of Lee, but had said quite definitely that she did not love him as he did her, and did not

think she ever would. Whether there was someone else in the background Mrs. Temperley had not sought to know.

Lee was knocked right over. He withdrew at once to his room and there could do nothing but heave great long-drawn sighs as if the whole life was going out of him. The one comfort he had was hearing of the way in which Miss Denver had spoken of him. He could feel that though she could not give her love to him, yet she had a true good loving heart, and that he had done well to set his affections on her. But comfort though that was in one way, in another it only deepened his grief at losing such a treasure. He felt utterly broken. She was not in any way to blame; but it had always been his way to think the best of everything, and that all would come right in the end. He had prayed hard to God to incline her towards him, and he believed that in His good time her love would come. He had made up his mind that as soon as he had told her of his love she would tell him how she, too, had loved him; and when the reply which he had counted on for years was in exactly the opposite sense, he was simply struck down: he felt as if there was nothing left in him—the bottom had gone out of his life.

But Mrs. Denver and Mrs. Temperley did their best to comfort Lee. They seemed, indeed, almost as distressed as himself; and this in itself was a consolation to him, for it at least showed their high opinion of him. And to be able to speak of his love did ease him somewhat. But for the few remaining days he was at Tirich he could do nothing else but heave those long-drawn sighs from the great void within him.

Years afterwards Mrs. Temperley expressed a doubt as to her wisdom in intervening. And perhaps Miss Denver's well-wishers *were* over-zealous. Though bright and open and ready, she was a very sensitive

girl. The merest reference to there being anything between her and Lee made her shrink within herself. Her heart was her affair, and she recoiled from any interference with it. She would wish to act as her parents and friends would desire; but she must be trusted: she must be left to act in her own way. They might show that they liked Lee—that he was a favourite with them; but any hint on their part of their wanting her to engage herself to him, evidently only put her up against him. Left to themselves Miss Denver and Lee might have come together as flame to flame. They might even have come together if they had been opposed, for there was a touch of stubbornness and contrariness in both. But when Miss Denver was interfered with the only result was to put her up against Lee, cause agony to him and great pain to her.

The result caused deep distress, too, in Lee's home. He wrote and told his mother all that had happened; and he was astonished when he got their letters a few weeks later to find what a terrible shock the mere fact of his letting his love be known had been to them. His father and mother feared for his whole career; they had not contemplated his marrying for years yet, they said, and it was a sad disappointment to them that he had entangled himself like this in a way that might blight all his prospects. As for Miss Lee she was heart-broken: the most perfect woman who had ever existed would not have been good enough for her precious brother; and perhaps there was just a tinge of regret that the devotion which had formerly all been hers should now be poured forth on another.

These letters caused Lee considerable distress; and he felt hurt by them. But they had an unexpected effect upon him: they stiffened him and he determined to win Miss Denver yet. He would not propose to her without his parents' goodwill: he

was too devoted to them, and owed them too much for that. But he made up his mind that when his career was assured and when he was in a position to support her, he would ask his parents' blessing and then make his proposal to her: this was now his resolution.

CHAPTER XV

SORROW UPON SORROW

LEE returned to his regiment stricken, indeed, with a piercing wound in his soul; but not now depressed: by some curious turn in his nature he was actually elated. Whether he had been wise or not in his relations with Miss Denver at any rate he had been true: he had stuck to his love; and he meant to stick to it still. So in spite of the hurt in his soul he went about with a new elation. Being in love had done him good; and giving expression to that love had lightened him. After the first shock came a reaction. Something new rising within him made him feel more capable: he felt lighter and quicker. What he had to do he could now do with greater ease and alacrity; and though more sad at heart he was more cheerful with his companions. He was, in fact, feeling more of a man: he was feeling his manhood growing within him.

And his prospects in the service were brightening. His adjutancy—now over—had been a real success; and his old Colonel had written congratulating him on the good work he had done in the regiment and also offering to help him to obtain a Staff appointment. Lee had replied that he had no wish to go on the staff, for he preferred being with his regiment in close contact with officers and men. But he thanked Colonel Bond for his kindness, and was greatly heartened by his good opinion.

Fate ordained, though, that Lee should not always

be with his regiment. Colonel Bond was pleased at Lee's being so attached to it. But he knew that if Lee was to rise to high command he must widen his experience. He had, therefore, about a year later, recommended him to Government for employment on a Mission which was about to start for the Perso-Afghan frontier. He knew of the interest Lee had taken in Indian life, of his industry in learning both Persian and Hindustani, and of his capacity for dealing with Indians, so he had got Lee appointed to this Mission as Intelligence Officer. Lee had been back with his regiment for a year now, and was by no means averse from a change such as this. He would be going into wild and strange lands and working with some of the ablest men in India. And the qualms of his conscience being salved by the thought that Colonel Bond would never have recommended him for this appointment if he had thought there was anything detrimental to the regiment in his accepting it, his mind was free on that score, and his heart leapt within him at the prospect of adventure.

The Mission was secret, and I am not yet at liberty to say where it went or what it did. All I can tell is that it was designed to secure our Indian frontier against the coming menace of the Germans. The Germans could not directly invade India, but they could—and, in fact, did during the Great War—send officers to stir up Afghanistan and the Chiefs of India against us. A century ago we feared a French menace from that direction. Later we feared the Russians. And now it was the Germans; and ordinary wisdom dictated that we should try by every diplomatic means to keep them as far as possible at arm's length. We wanted by any means we could to prevent the Germans gaining access to our frontier should war break out. That was the object of the Mission to which Lee was appointed as Intelligence Officer; and his presence on it in that capacity gave him

exceptional opportunities of studying large questions of Military Strategy and Frontier Policy.

Before leaving he paid a hurried visit to the Denvers to say Good-bye ; and being now in good spirits he was much more at ease with Miss Denver, and in consequence much more hopeful he might still win her. And now he had obtained his promotion as Captain, so his pay was increased ; he was also receiving additional pay and allowances while on the Mission ; and his expenses would be less than they were with the regiment where so much entertainment had to be paid for. He could feel, therefore, that his position, both in the service and in the pecuniary way, was assured ; and feeling this he wrote once more to his parents, telling them he owed everything in life to them, and was unwilling to make any further move as regards Miss Denver until he was sure he had their blessing on him ; but saying that he now had money enough to marry on, so marriage would not stand in the way of his career, and hoping that they would, therefore, approve of his proposing to her.

The Mission then started on its long march across deserts and mountains to the remote region where Afghanistan and Persia met, and where arrangements had to be made for preserving British influence and ensuring the earliest information of any hostile intent on India. And here in this distant camp his parents' reply was received. Neither his mother nor his sister was at all enthusiastic about a second proposal ; mothers and sisters seldom are very warm when a son or a brother is proposing : once he is married he is never to the same extent their own. But, at any rate, Mrs. Lee did not raise any objection ; and the good little Admiral gave his boy a real blessing. He said he had heard nothing but good of Miss Denver, and he wished them both every happiness.

A great burden was lifted off Lee's soul ; and immediately he received these letters he wrote once

more to Miss Denver, asking her to marry him. He reminded her how long he had kept to his love ; he told her of his position and prospects and of his parents' good wishes ; he would not expect that she would love him as he loved her, but he was sure that when they came together God would put a little love for him into her heart.

This letter he sent off by the fortnightly courier, and then waited patiently for the reply, which he knew could not come for months, as she was back in England and he was at a great distance even from India.

As before, he thought that she would not be able at first to give any great love, but he could never believe that she would refuse him altogether. And he thought—though *why* it is hard to imagine—that the time since he had left her was too short for her to be engaged to anyone else. So through the long winter he kept encouraging himself with the hope that she would accept him and that they would correspond a little till he returned to India, and in this way get to know each other. And then when they met and the first hard trials of his career were over and he could have a just pride in what he had achieved, and when, too, his parents' sympathy would be all with him, he would be able to be open with her and pour out his love and at last win her to him.

These were the hopes with which he fortified himself through the hard winter. Snow had blocked the passes and the mails were delayed. But at last at the end of March a mail arrived and with it one in Mrs. Denver's handwriting, but none in Nina's. He was terribly anxious and nervous. He thought there might be one from her inside Mrs. Denver's. But there was none. Then he began to read Mrs. Denver's. It was written before his letter to Miss Denver could have arrived. She said at the start that she had some bad news to tell him. He could

only read the letter in little bits. At length came the full blow he was being prepared for—Miss Denver was engaged to someone else.

Again Lee felt struck right down to the very ground with all the life gone out of him. He wrote a short note to his companions, saying he had had bad news and begging them not to allow anyone to come near him. Then he walked up and down his tent fighting against his sorrow. He did not actually cry, though he often wished to : he just felt struck so hard that all feeling had left him ; his whole being was numbed, and all capacity for feeling had gone.

Thus it was that after all these years Lee lost the prize upon which he had so set his heart ; and if we look into it the reason is not really so far to seek : in a sense he was too deadly in earnest ; and with all his earnestness there was too much diffidence : he had not that ordinary *savoir faire* which men acquire who had been more continually in the society of girls and women than he had ever been. He had no “way with him” in their company : he was stilted and restrained. Love is a battle, and the battle goes not only to the strong, but to the confident and adroit ; and so a man with more natural ease and assurance and greater grace and attractiveness of manner had succeeded when Lee with all his loyalty and persistency had failed ; though in justice to Lee it should be added that the fault lay not so much with him personally as in our custom of herding our men together on the one side and our women on the other—the men out in the Empire, the women at home. Little wonder is that they misunderstand one another.

After three days by himself Lee rejoined his companions, feeling quite dazed, but thankful to hear conversation going on around him once more. He

wrote a letter to Mrs. Denver, saying he felt utterly broken, but that through positive fear of giving way on that distant frontier he had had to fight his sorrow down and keep from despairing. He said he had nothing to complain of, for Nina had always honestly told him she did not love him. He asked her to tell Nina he did sincerely wish her all true happiness, and hoped that she, too, would think kindly of him; and he thanked Mr. and Mrs. Denver for the kindness and sympathy they had shown him, and especially for having done him the highest honour they could by so freely helping him to win the love of a daughter so dear to them as Nina. God had ordained otherwise, he said, but he would always gratefully remember the kindness they had shown him.

Lee wrote home, too, to his mother, asking her not to blame Miss Denver, and saying that he felt strong and able to bear the sorrow. This he wrote on the fifth day after he had received Mrs. Denver's letter, and he had just sent it off when a messenger came in with a mail from the Persian direction. There was in it a letter with a deep black edge and in Admiral Lee's handwriting. It instantly flashed across Lee's mind that when he had last heard from home a few weeks before, they had said that his mother was ill. He feared at once that this was to say she had died. He tremblingly read the letter—and so it was. She was dead, and he alone of all the family was away at her last moments. This was a worse blow—far—than the first. And again he shut himself up and entirely gave way to his grief. Tears now flowed on and on beyond all control. When he had heard of Miss Denver's engagement he had felt more than ever drawn to his mother, for he thought she was the only one he would ever be able to speak freely to about it. After his hard trials he wanted that peace which it seemed he could only get with her. Now she, too, was taken from him; and the feeling

came over him that it was too much of himself that he had been thinking, and that for himself it was useless to think of happiness.

He still kept apart from his companions, but he wrote long letters home and to his friends. He read a great deal, too, and began to think deeply upon the objects of life. Then he went back to his companions. At first he could scarcely speak above a whisper : it seemed as if he would disturb something if he did. His nerves, too, were so highly strung that the least noise would give him a start. And when his companions said things to cheer him the smile could not come ; but he keenly felt their kindness, and he liked to be with them and to listen to their talk. Neither then nor afterwards could he speak to them about what had happened ; but he knew that they felt for him ; and in a few days he talked to them about ordinary things as naturally as before.

This having to be with his fellow-officers and to do official work drew him to some extent out of himself. But when he was alone he used to sit for hours together thinking of what had been, thinking of his darling mother, thinking of Nina Denver, and of the love he had given her ; and the wound was slow to close, and any chance allusion to her in a letter sent a sharp pang right through him. And now he longed with unspeakable longing to be back with his dear old father ; and a horrible dread came over him that political complications might necessitate his spending another winter on the frontier. A sickening fear he had that something might happen to his father or himself before they could meet again.

And all this distress of mind brought great change in his inner life. An epoch of his life was over : a new start must be made. His love was ended ; his mother was gone ; an emptiness was left in his soul, and he must get down to the root of things and begin a fresh growth. He wanted to understand

more of the world, how it was governed and guided, and what really was the nature of God. Lee had trusted Him implicitly and still did; but he felt he had not understood God rightly. God evidently did not act in the way he had thought: Lee had thought that if he prayed to God and left things in His hands God would give him his love. But God hadn't. He must bow to His will; but what then was God's will?

He became absorbed in religion: it was now what interested him above all else. He would give up everything for its sake. If necessary he would leave the service and devote his whole life to it. Nothing must be allowed to stand in the way of doing what was best—doing whatever he might find to be the will of God. That—and that only—he would do.

In the meanwhile he absorbed himself in framing his own conception of things. His old idea of God, a kind of invisible ghost, he had to abandon. But he could never give up the belief that there was a spiritual being of some kind at work in the world; so now instead of beginning by trying to understand what God must be, he started with the world first—the common world all round us—and tried to understand that. He thought of the multiplicity and variety of life that he had seen, the extraordinarily varied peoples he had met with, the forest tribes, the animals, birds, and insects, the trees and plants he had seen in the Indian forests. And he marvelled at the Power which must be back of all this. It certainly “moved in a mysterious way its wonders to perform.” And he pined to know more of this way and how he could fall in with it. What he saw with his eyes was, he knew, only the outward and visible sign. It was the inward and spiritual grace that he wished to lay hold of. Beside that quest how paltry, insignificant and commonplace every other activity in life now seemed!

As soon as he returned to India he applied for and obtained six months' leave of absence, and when his Mission was over he raced off home. In a way he dreaded the return to civilisation: there would be so much to remind him of the past. But by degrees there came to him a desire to be in among numbers of people, to feel ordinary life going on about him, and to talk to people who knew nothing of his story. And he became less strained and abnormal.

His home-coming was sad: it could not but be with no more sweet welcome from his dearest mother. But in seeing his old father again there was deep and most satisfying comfort. And as Lee came to settle down in his home his judgment gradually steadied itself. And it was then that I had the honour of first meeting Admiral Lee, for Evan had invited me to his home. And it was easy to see how devoted father and son were to one another. The father was proud of his son, and the son adored his father: there was a beautiful affection between them. He had broached to his father the idea of leaving the service, in order to devote himself to religion; but it was evident that it would have gone terribly against the grain with Evan to have done anything of which the Admiral really disapproved; and leaving the service the old veteran would without doubt have emphatically deprecated. Still, fond as he was of his father and gratefully as he acknowledged all the Admiral had done for him Lee would have gone against even him if his whole nature had demanded it.

But before he came to any final decision as to whether he would leave the service and give himself up completely to religion or return to his regiment, he would have a talk with Truman. In the meanwhile he would to some extent fall in with the Admiral's wish that he should go more into society

and enjoy himself with his fellows—not take life too seriously and try to forget his troubles. Miss Lee, too, did her best to get him to mix more with people. Secretly she was relieved that Miss Denver was engaged. Evan was now free for her, and she treasured every moment he was with her. She enjoyed taking him out, and arranged many an entertainment for him—tennis parties, luncheons, dinners, dances, social gatherings of all kinds. And he for his part was not unsociable : he had no wish to keep aloof from his fellows. Only at this period he was hot in the pursuit of truth ; and he hated being drawn aside while he was in full cry. Social entertainments occupied such an inordinate length of time and kept him up to such late hours that it was on this account and not from any actual dislike of humanity that he was reluctant to go much into society during his short stay in England : the few months he might have at home he wanted mainly to devote to finding out what science and philosophy had to tell about the deepest problems of existence. And upon this, too, he especially wanted to consult Truman.

CHAPTER XVI

THE GREAT DECISION

SO Lee sought out Truman at Oxford, and got him to keep an evening entirely for themselves. After dining in Hall they went up to his rooms to smoke and talk. Here everything told of intellectual effort: the room was cased round with books; papers were heaped on the table; and Truman himself was clearly as keen and fit and alert in mind as Lee was in body. Day by day, year in and year out, he was incessantly sharpening his wits against fresh young intellects and was constantly kept abreast of the leading thoughts of the time. And he was gradually acquiring an air of greatness: great love of great things was clearly his predominant motive.

As they settled into comfortable chairs in front of the fire Lee first tried to draw Truman on his philosophy. He remembered how convinced Truman had been that a philosopher's life was the best, and how he had given up music and deliberately preferred to devote his life to philosophy rather than enter the Church; and he now wanted to find out if he was still of the same mind, and if he still meant to write a great book and be another Hegel or Kant.

"Yes, I'm working away harder than ever at my book," said Truman, "and I find this teaching is a splendid stimulus for writing. The two go together and help each other; and it's hard to say which will do the more good. I've a constant succession of

keen young minds to direct, and they're, as far as intellect is concerned, the pick of the University. And while I guide them they freshen me. I don't see the crowd, and that may be a deficiency; but I do see the choice few very closely; and what I teach them they will in turn pass on to the many, and so my influence will grow and spread. Then there are my colleagues, and with them as well as with my class, there is both conflict and co-operation of thought: we criticise as well as help each other. That is how we progress. And that is where we get our joy in life. And, of course, down at bottom I have the old ambition to write a book which will be quoted and taught—which would make a mark in the world of thought. I should like to feel I had done that as my life's work."

"I can understand that, old chap, and I only wish I had your gifts and could do the same. And now I want to make use of the wisdom you must have accumulated all the time I've been away in India. Out there one bottles up a lot one wants to ask about, and I've been pining to ask you questions on some very fundamental things. You won't mind, will you?"

"My dear old Evan, I'd love to help you if I can. That's what I'm here for. What is it?"

"Well, the first thing I want to know is whether philosophy is going to chill religion out of existence."

"Good gracious, No!" ejaculated Truman.

"What I mean is this: do you, living here in a very freezing house of intellect, think that religion will slowly be frozen to death? Will religion gradually become a back number, mere sentimentality, not fit for men with any brains? You know the churches are packed with women, and it's often said this is because they are emotional and less well-balanced than men, and that eventually no 'brainy' men will go there. Now do you find that

philosophers, whose business it is to look into fundamentals, and who certainly have brains—do *they* think that religion will gradually perish as magic has—slowly dwindle away ? ”

Truman laughed greatly : “ My good old chap. Don’t believe one single word of that. There’s not the very slightest foggiest chance of philosophy freezing religion to death. It’s the other way on. Religion will warm philosophy to life. Religion is the real thing.”

“ Then why do you go in for philosophy, Eddie, and not for religion ? ”

“ You mustn’t judge by appearances. That’s one of the first things we learn in philosophy. You must go behind the outward appearance to the reality which lies behind it.”

“ And what is the reality that lies behind the fact that you are a philosopher—and I hear one of the most rising ? ”

“ That all my philosophy is founded on religion. The best philosophy must be—and the best anything. It is religious experience which gives us the deepest insight into what the world really is at bottom. Then we philosophers, with our cold intellectual knives, dissect this experience and analyse it and see how it fits with other experiences of the world into a coherent whole. We can get on without magic, but most certainly we can’t get on without religion. Personally I think we’ve neglected it far too much. A long way the most important events in human history have been the rise of great religious personalities and such spiritual upheavals as that on the day of Pentecost. It is by understanding these that we shall best get to understand the nature of the world—which is the business of philosophy. But to understand them we ourselves must be religiously disposed. That’s why I say that the more religion a philosopher has the better his

philosophy. And that's why I keep to my religion as a base for my philosophy. My religion is the reality behind the appearance of my philosophy."

"You don't think religion is played out, then?"

"Played out! Why, religion has hardly begun! We're suckling babes in the matter of religion. We don't know what it is yet. If we did, it would absorb our lives. We wouldn't be able to get on without it. We would have a passion for it like some of us have for music. Played out! Why it's *the* thing of the future. Soon it'll be thought as barbaric to be without religion as it now is to have no feeling for beauty."

"Still, Eddie, old boy, I can't understand why, if you think like this, you don't go in for religion—go in for it I mean as definitely and thoroughly as you do for philosophy."

"There you have me, Evan. But, secretly between you and me, I have a suspicion that one day I shall. By this philosophy I test and sift and clear my religious beliefs, and get to the heart of the big, main, general faith I have in the goodness of things. And I am building up a philosophy which will justify my creed—for it is all rubbish to suppose that we can get along without a creed of some kind. Then I shall have a belief that I can hold on to with all my might as my great mainstay in life. And when I have that then I shall hark back again to religion. For I don't want to spend my whole life criticising and arguing like we philosophers do. Life is not all thought. Life is action as well. The two go together, in fact. But it is religion that gives the impulse to action, and religion that supplies the goal. Philosophy only supplies the guidance on the way—absolutely necessary indeed, but not sufficient by itself."

"That's great news, dear old chap. The best I've heard for a long time."

“It’s only natural though. There’s nothing extraordinary about it. Philosophers don’t agree about many things ; but, if there’s one thing more than another that they do agree about, it is that the world is *spiritual*. Some say that it is nothing else but spirit. They also say that the more any being is imbued with the essential Spirit of the world, the *higher* he is, and the less he is imbued the *lower* he is. Obviously, it must be the case that the more we partake of the central life of the world the higher in the scale of being we shall be, and the less we participate in it the lower. That being so, any man of sense who has a particle of ambition in him would try to put himself in touch with the Fountain Source. In other words he would fit himself and open himself to be imbued with the Holy Spirit. That is, he will cultivate religion. I do now, of course. But I often wish I had more time for *worship*. I get tired sometimes of this sheer hard thinking, essential though it is. And I wish there were a kind of public worship in which we could all join in praise and admiration of the holiest things in life. We would have the beauty of holiness put before us and held up for our admiration. We would have joy in worshipping it, and would long and strive to attain it. I will bring my music in some day and see if I can work out something on that line.”

“This is all most heartening to hear, especially from you, Eddie. And it helps me to put my other question. I badly want your advice. In fact, it is what I have been most wanting since I’ve been home. I must tell you how matters stand with me. The thing is this. I’ve had two bad knocks—about as bad as a man could have. One—the worst—you know about : the other you can guess. I’ve been brought right up upon myself ; and now I’ve to make a fresh start. My old father when I first went out to India dinned into me that I should make the

best of myself. I've never forgotten his advice : I want to make the very best of myself. That is I know what my dear mother must have prayed and prayed that I should do ; and I feel that as far as in me lies I must fulfil her prayer."

"Yes," said Truman, "it's only through you yourself—by your *own* activity—that God *can* answer your mother's prayer."

"That is how I look at it," continued Lee ; "I've only one life to live and I must make the utmost of it. I want to live my life to some real purpose. I want to come up to all that my dear mother would have expected of me and hoped for me. I want to be able to feel that I'm doing some real good in the world—and that what I do is the very best of which I'm capable. I'm now just at my prime ; but I have this pause of some months' leave in England and I want to take stock of my position. I've decided to devote my life to religion as you've devoted yours to philosophy. But what I want to talk over with you is what practical steps I should take. I've been eight years in India now and have a certain amount of practical experience ; but I'm still young enough and vigorous enough to take up which line I choose."

"Do you mean whether to continue in the Army or go into the Church or work in the slums ?" asked Truman.

"Yes. I'm prepared to do whatever is the best. But I must decide my line definitely now before it's too late. In India when a man determines to lead a religious life he goes off into the jungles. He gives up all his possessions—even his name sometimes—and wanders about for years with hardly a stitch of clothing, with no home of his own, and dependent on charity for his food. He lives in caves and huts or in the courtyards of temples, and devotes his whole life to spiritual contemplation, to sitting at the feet of noted holy men and learning wisdom from them,

and to laying down the law to others when he has become a recognised master himself. 'I've actually seen one of these Swamis who has done this. Now what I shall have to decide is how far I shall have to go and do likewise. Shall I give up the Army and devote myself entirely to living a religious life, going off somewhere by myself, living the simplest possible life, devoting my life to studying religion and then imparting it to others? It seems that I ought to, and I mean to do my part thoroughly if I do it at all. But I've seen these Indian ascetics and somehow they're unconvincing. Perhaps it's because I'm a dull-witted Englishman, but this going apart from life doesn't appeal to me. I like to be *in* life. I like to be with warm human beings. There's nothing in them that they should be avoided. Keep closer to them, not run away from them: that is my feeling."

"Quite right," said Truman. "Keep in life. And, if I might say so, keep to the life you're now leading. You're doing well in the Army and are just as truly made for a soldier's life as I am for a philosopher's. Only keep religion at the back of your soldiering as I keep it at the back of my philosophy. You might chuck everything and go and live in the East End, and work among the poor and do a great deal of good, no doubt. But not nearly so much good on the whole—and that is the main question—as living to perfection the life to which you are congenitally fitted and to which you have been trained. So be perfect in your own line. Be a perfect soldier. I don't see you working in the slums or settling down in a quiet village studying and writing or speaking. That may come later—not now. You're a man of action. And religion is meant for action. So here is a field for your religion. Take hold of your own peculiar genius, and through your religion, by infinite pains and persistence, develop it to the utmost. Stick to your soldiering and do that. That's how you'll do

most good in the world. Anyhow that's my advice, old chap—the best I can give."

" And splendid advice it is too," said Lee. " Only remember this. It's no easy matter to lead a soldier's life religiously. Here you live in a regular atmosphere of philosophy. You're breathing philosophic air all day long, and can devote yourself to philosophy without distraction. But with my regiment I shall have no advantage like that. The atmosphere is anything but religious. What I care for above everything else I shall hardly ever be able to speak about ; and I shall run the risk of having all my enthusiasm sapped. In a few years' time I may be completely dried up. It's a very great risk. I may then find that I made a mistake in not leaving the Army and devoting my whole life to religion as you give all yours to philosophy. I may by that time have become hard and see I missed my chance and bitterly regret it. It almost seems cowardly not to take the plunge now."

" I hadn't seen things quite like that before," acknowledged Truman, " and I recognise your difficulty. I'm unconvinced though. I see now that you'll have a harder task than I had imagined. But I do see quite clearly that if, in spite of all the difficulty, you lead a soldier's life in a godly way you will be doing much more good in the world than most Archbishops of Canterbury. We English are a practical people, and we like to see a thing done. Show us a godly life actually led and we will go and live the same. But we will not live it from merely being told to."

" Very well. The die is cast. I'll keep to my soldiering. And it's a relief, really ; for I love a soldier's life. But mind you, it's a terribly hard task I have before me. I daresay I shall be thought smug and hypocritical, and as trying to make myself out superior to others ; and that is what would hurt

me most of all. And I shall feel very lonely and apart at times. Still nothing great can be done without risk and hardship, so I'll make the venture."

Thus was the great decision made ; and Lee prepared to go back to his regiment satisfied in his soul that he had decided aright.

CHAPTER XVII

ON THE VOYAGE

IN October Lee returned to India on the P. and O. *Tyne*. There was on board the usual crowd of military and civil officers, engineers, and business men, going back to their duties, and many ladies who had left their husbands in India to look after their children in England now returning to their husbands ; and, in addition to these hardened Anglo-Indians, a few "globe-trotters" going out to enjoy a cold-weather in India. Up to Suez there had been the customary stiffness and coldness ; but with the warmer weather the passengers gradually thawed to one another and sorted themselves out to their proper affinities. And Lee's affinity was Lady Meara, who with her husband was paying a visit to India, determined to make the most of the four months available.

She was perhaps a year or two older than Lee, and certainly older in her knowledge of what is called "the world," for Sir Herbert was the owner of a country place and of a house in Grosvenor Street. She was, therefore, accustomed to much entertaining and to mingling with men and women in many varied lines of life. I did not know her at this time, but I knew her later, as she was most anxious to hear everything I could tell her about Evan Lee. She was very much a great lady, but she was the easiest and most refreshing woman to talk to I have ever met. She seemed to divine at once what most interested you

and what you most wanted to speak about, and she would then draw it out of you almost without your knowing it and be keenly interested in it herself too. She was critical; for she enjoyed appraising people and things, and was nice to a hair's breadth in her discrimination; but to any base imputation she was quite irresponsible; and after a talk with her you seemed to have been carried to those heights it is always a delight to reach: her passion so evidently was for lovable people and all that was noble and lovely.

Some women become so absorbed in hunting, shooting, tennis, golf, and games, as to lose all womanly grace and become mere copies of men. Others live a hot-house, scented life, and wither and crinkle if a breath of fresh air enters their room. But a few there are—and these the glory of our race—who have been brought up in rain and sunshine, and have been accustomed to mix with men and women of every rank in life, and to live with animals, and who yet retain every womanly charm. As children they have been tended by devoted nurses who have showered the warmest love upon them, while enforcing strong discipline too, and who have come to be looked on more as family friends than as paid servants. Their parents have instilled into them from their earliest days that they must be thoughtful and considerate for those dependent on the family. Ponies, dogs, pets of all kinds, they have been taught properly to look after. And from their parents' own example they have learned to be courteous to men and women of every grade of life, and considerate to animals. As a consequence, they have grown up with an ease and grace and freshness which has become part of their very nature. They are no mere drawing-room orchids: they have the charm and fragrance of the wild rose. And of these was Lady Meara. She combined all the healthy vigour of the open air with the

tenderness and elegance which come to woman as her birthright.

Alas ! she is no longer with us. She never recovered the strain she put upon herself during the War in turning her home into a hospital. But this at least enables me to write of her as freely and feelingly as I would like to and I gladly avail myself of the advantage.

The general impression she gave was of great good breeding. She held herself proudly erect, but in no stiff statuesque way. It was rather with the suppleness and grace in every line and movement of a Derby winner ; and she had all its tense vitality and high, sensitive spirit. Everything about her was taut and compact. She confronted the world with an easy simple assurance ; and this confidence in herself attracted confidence in others. She was never in anything else than perfect poise, to a nicety fitted to every occasion. Every movement was exact and graceful, and when she rested she rested completely. Always there was finish.

It was the same with her expression : it was not set and rigid ; it was either completely still, and then full of delicious repose, or else in swift unceasing motion, reflecting every change in her versatile soul. I cannot remember the exact colour of her eyes, but they had the liquid clearness of a bird's, and in addition that power of receiving and responding which only human beings possess—they not only observed : they loved. Her expression was, indeed, a joy to watch ; and by its bewitching sweetness it lured everyone to her ; for it told of desire to love and be loved. And that she must have had a passion for personal beauty you could tell from the pains she took to make herself beautiful, and this not from shallow vanity, but from a praiseworthy pride in herself and everything round her : all about her was lovely, and like herself adapted to every occasion.

No wonder that Evan Lee was drawn to her ; and as he happened to sit at the same table at meals he had opportunity of meeting her. She had a great capacity for throwing her whole self into whatever she took up ; and as this was her first journey to India she raced as fast and keen as a greyhound, after knowledge about it. She plied Lee with unremitting questions : he could feel she really wanted to see and understand the country, and even *his* interest in India was roused to more fervent heat.

But what really brought Lady Meara and Lee together was Truman. Lee had happened to mention that he had been visiting him at Oxford, and she asked : " Is he the very coming young man who has now become a philosopher, but who plays divinely ? "

" Yes, he might have been great in music, but he has decided for philosophy. I was at school with him, and have the greatest admiration for him," said Lee.

" And I, too, have known him for years. I'm devoted to music and he has played in our house in London since he was a boy. I'm very fond of him ; but I had always hoped he would give up his life to music."

" He would have excelled at anything he chose to do ; but he thinks he had to take up one thing definitely, and not dissipate himself, so he has gone in for philosophy."

" It seems a pity, doesn't it ? " said Lady Meara. " He had such a beautiful soul and philosophy seems so dry."

" I agree with you about the beauty of his soul : it's of the purest white of any man's I know ; and it's white all through. But he has great ideas on philosophy : his theory is that it ought to have soul, and he means to put soul into it. In fact, he's going to make philosophy his religion ; for at heart he's very religious."

" So I should have imagined," said Lady Meara. " I don't know him as well as you do ; but I remember what a perfectly delightful boy he was : I could see genius bubbling out of him ; and from some of the music he played me I knew he had deep religious feeling. The finest music there is is sacred ; and it was sacred music he always much preferred to play when he could."

" I build such hopes on him," said Lee. " He'll do great things for England. And he's not one of those planets which only reflect light from another. He's a true star. He shines of himself. He makes his own glory."

The night after leaving Suez a dance on deck was arranged. By that time the passengers had begun to know each other, and the chills of the Mediterranean being left behind and the sweltering heat of the Red Sea not yet reached the temperature was perfect. Lee and Lady Meara danced several waltzes together ; and never till then did he know what dancing was. Into the dance, as into everything else, she put her whole soul. She was as light as a bird in the air, and yet with a power which lifted Lee into the air too. She seemed a very part of the music, and as it rose and fell, and together they swayed and swung with the waltz, the rhythm of it touched the rhythm in him, and he felt carried away to a heaven he had not known till now, and tasted one more of the many sweet joys in life.

On other evenings they danced too, and during the day he would often sit beside her or walk up and down on deck talking of India, talking of the people on board, talking of his or her plans. Imperceptibly she became a very great deal to him, and he found himself continually thinking about her.

When the Indian Ocean was reached the weather was perfection—neither too hot nor too cold—and after dinner the passengers would sit on deck well

forward to catch the freshness of the breeze caused by the motion of the ship. Lee had found a place clear of the awnings where he could see the stars and look out ahead and see something of the horizon, and where he would be away from the perpetual thud of the screw, and away too from his fellow-passengers; and here he would often come in the evenings. And here he one evening brought Lady Meara: he felt the time had come for deep intimate talk with the woman who could lift his soul where it was so longing to reach, and he must make the most of the God-sent opportunity.

"I had always wondered where you disappeared to in the evenings, and now I know," said Lady Meara.

"I come here because I like to be quiet and look at the stars: they have an extraordinary fascination for me. In India, whenever I can, I sleep in the open. For one thing it is so much fresher than in a stuffy bungalow; and besides I can watch the stars."

"I shall try and do that, too, when I get to India, if I have a chance," said Lady Meara. "It would be delightful. In England we hardly ever see the stars. I spend a great deal of my time in the open air; but one is seldom out at night, except in a carriage. Now and then I've looked up to the sky and thought to myself what a lovely starry night it was, but I've never been so utterly fascinated by the stars as you seem to be."

"I daresay I might not have thought so much of them either if it had not been for a trip I once took in the Himalaya. I wanted to be regularly with the mountains. I left my tent behind and lived in the open for two or three weeks. I used to sleep on the ground in a nice comfortable sheepskin bag, and with the mountains like shadow shapes about me and the stars shining brightly above me I used to have the

feeling of belonging to the whole great universe just as much as to this earth. And I loved the great stillness too : it's not only very calming, but very stirring ; it always exalts me, and makes me go out in a kind of adoration."

" How I should love to go into the mountains too ! What splendid chances you men have in India ! Now I've left England, life there seems so humdrum and conventional in comparison."

" Anyhow in England you're at the centre of things and can see all the best men and women ; and human beings are better than stars and mountains."

" Yes, they are, but I should like to see mountains, too, and be with the stars like you've been."

" I've been very lucky, I must say. India, in some ways, is an exile, but at least we can see Nature on a greater scale than we can in England. On my first voyage out to India I was fearfully depressed : leaving home I felt terribly ; and India was so unknown and strange to me. Now I have in my mind a treasure-house of enjoyments I've had in India ; and these stars are one of them. I can never resist looking up at them when I've a chance, and here on board ship I find those lines of Matthew Arnold continually coming up in my mind :

" Weary of myself and sick of asking
What I am, and what I ought to be,
At this vessel's prow I stand, which bears me
Forwards, forwards, o'er the starlit sea.

And a look of passionate desire
O'er the sea and to the stars I send :
Ye who from my childhood up have calm'd me,
Calm me, ah, compose me to the end.

' Ah, once more,' I cried, ' ye stars, ye waters,
On my heart your mighty charm renew :
Still, still let me, as I gaze upon you,
Feel my soul becoming vast like you ! '

Not that I'm weary of myself, nor do I wish, as Matthew Arnold goes on, to be bounded by myself and unregardful in what state God's other works may be. But I do feel the calming and composing effect of the stars and my soul becoming vast like them."

"I haven't yet felt like that," said Lady Meara, "but now looking out over the sea and up to the stars, I do have a wonderful sense of the infinite."

"That's just it," said Lee. "One seems to go out and out and out, and at times like this I become filled with all kinds of ambitions—great boundless, spiritual ambitions, millions of miles wide."

"What are they, Captain Lee? I should so like to know. I've been longing to ask you for some time past, but didn't quite like to."

It was an appeal straight to Lee's soul; and the tone in which it was said showed that it came straight from hers: she was a kindred spirit, and he could speak with her. Perhaps, too, it was easier to speak to a comparative stranger whom he might never meet again than to his own family and those he was constantly with. And in communicating his ideas he would be testing them: he would be seeing how they stood contact with reality. Lady Meara was very sympathetic and very easy to talk to; but no one could talk futilities to her, and she would never stand mere sentimentality: Lee could see that. But he could see also that he could get inspiration from her on any line that was clearly good and true.

"Well, Lady Meara, this last week I've become full of tremendous ambitions; but they're for England. I want to do my little but my all to help England produce a real religious genius. The Hindus, the Jews, and the Arabs, have produced original religious leaders, why shouldn't we? And why shouldn't we excel all others? We've produced a supreme poet, why not also a supreme man of God?"

That's the ambition we English ought to have—nothing less. He would be something essentially English, but something universal at the same time—something all mankind would claim."

"What a splendid ambition," said Lady Meara; "I had never thought of that. But, of course, we English ought to have it. We oughtn't merely to imitate an outside religion and take it by rule: we ought to absorb it into us, make it our own—and then have our *own* religion growing out of *ourselves*. And what do you propose to do towards fulfilling your ambition?"

"I should first try to catch the spirit of the world—this whole great starry world we see about us now—and then do whatever I can to infuse it into England. And if a few others do the same then England will become imbued with the spirit of true religion, and it will then be possible for genius to arise."

"I see your idea, you want to create the atmosphere in which a genius *could* arise. But go on," said Lady Meara, "let us work it out together."

"What I would do is this," continued Lee, and he felt ideas coming into his head even as he spoke to her: she was so forthdrawing, "I shall try and get at the very souls of the best men who have yet appeared in any country or in any sphere of life, and who, therefore, best reveal the nature and purpose of God. The great religious leaders I shall especially try and understand—and above all Christ. They have done most of all to elevate mankind, and satisfy men's deepest needs and aspirations; and it is them in particular I want to emulate. But I shall not look only to the past: I like to know about men and women of the present. I'm certain that at all times there are unrecognised men and women—real saints of goodness—who are actually living lives such as others only preach about. And as these are lived under conditions which we all know they are more

helpful to us than lives of which we've only the tradition and which were lived centuries ago under conditions very different from the present."

"I do so thoroughly agree with you, Captain Lee, about saintlike lives of the present time. We hear so much about decadence and about all the good being in the past; but in one way and another I see a good deal of life, and I know of people—and rich people too, for the poor have not the monopoly of goodness—who are perfect angels. They have every inducement to be indolent and selfish, and to indulge themselves in all the lower pleasures of life; but they slave their lives away for the good of those about them, their families, their dependents, the village folk, everyone with whom they are connected. I feel terribly humble when I think of them. *They* are the true salt of the earth."

"I was sure there must be," said Lee, "for I have known some myself. My own mother was one. And these people with real soul in them and who have cleansed and purified their souls must often, as Matthew Arnold says, feel their souls becoming vast like the stars above. And they it is who get into touch with the Fountain Spirit of the world. And it's a little fad of my own, but often I dream that rays of spiritual glory rain in upon us from beings living on some planets of the thousand million stars and impress themselves upon souls like Blake's just as physical rays of light reach us from the stars. It may be literally true that the stars sing together for joy. That, however, is only a little fancy of mine: it can't be proved one way or the other. What I do most firmly believe, though, is that from somewhere in the heart of the Universe at large we on this earth do get intuitions, and that it is these impressions—these intimations from above—that lift us on to a higher level. Christ was an example. Through what he received humanity has been raised on to a loftier plane. And I sometimes

think, Lady Meara, that it's women like you who are best able to *divine* the inmost nature of things, that is to say, to discover God. You have such wonderful powers of intuition, and love of beauty and love of love, you must be able to see and take in things we ordinary people have neither the sensitiveness of soul to detect nor the responsiveness to respond to. Those intuitions must be subjected to the keen criticism of the intellect and tested by hard thinking: but they may be the discoverers."

"Perhaps some of us have this intuitive power," said Lady Meara. "There are times when I do myself feel as if I had something very, very sensitive right in the deepest heart of me which takes up the most delicate impressions and responds to them. It is my soul, my real self, the essential part of me, the ground and inspiration of all that is in me, and the part of me that aspires after all that is highest—the part of me in fact that comes in directest contact with God. It is the moving spirit in me. Some call it a spark, but I think of it also as a jet or ray. Now it's like fire, now like light, now like water, now like colour, now like music. Sometimes it is calm, serene, and reposeful. Sometimes it is jetting with terrific force and to stupendous heights, bubbling and sparkling and flooding over all round. Sometimes it seems as if it were quite alone, separate from everything else in the world. And sometimes it seems joined tightly to every other person and thing in the world—joined firmly, but always remaining itself. It is through this soul of me that I seem to get in touch with the Holy Spirit. And when my soul is going out like that I feel at the same time that the Spirit is in me. I feel part of the Spirit; and yet as if the Spirit were in me. And where what is me ends and where what is the Spirit begins I cannot make out. There seems no difference indeed. The Spirit is in me and I am in the Spirit."

She had spoken very earnestly. But now she suddenly pulled herself up, as if she were on the brink of saying too much.

"But I really must be going now, Captain Lee. We've been so interested in our talk we've forgotten how the time has been passing. Almost everyone has disappeared from the decks. Good night. It has been such a joy to me to have a talk like this upon things that really matter."

"Good night, Lady Meara, but you'll have another talk to-morrow night, won't you? There's so much more I want to discuss with you. It will be our last night. We may never have another chance. Don't let us lose it."

"Very well. Let us come here again to-morrow night for a last talk. And if I can summon up courage enough there's something I should like to tell you which may be of the greatest help to you, but it will be hard for me to tell it."

"You absolutely *must*, Lady Meara. You must promise me now that you will."

"All right. I promise you faithfully. Now good night again. I should like to stop here talking all night long, but we can't always do what we like, can we?"

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When she was gone Lee walked up and down the deck for a long time. The whole of his being was strangely excited. Perhaps he was in love; but if so it was with the white pure love of the soul; and he now most sternly vowed he would ever keep it that: it would be the direst sacrilege to lower it. He went once more forward and leant over the rail and gazed out over the waters; and then throwing his head up to the stars he solemnly put his vow as something holy before heaven. Having performed this act he felt calmer, and at last reluctantly went down to his cabin.

What went on in Lady Meara's heart who can say ? She was no callous woman of the world with her heart steeled against all feeling : she was a very womanly woman in the full glory of her womanhood, with a great capacity for loving and a great love of being loved. But she had the strictest command over herself. For years she had trained herself to it. And she might be trusted not by one single word or sign, by glance of the eye or touch of the hand or tone of the voice, to inflame him unworthily. She was too proud for that. She could play with fire because she knew the nature of fire and was ready to stand by its laws. So she could turn it away from destruction and use it for warmth and light.

CHAPTER XVIII

LADY MEARA'S CONFIDENCE

THE last day of the voyage had come : to-morrow Bombay would be reached. Everyone was expectant : those who had never seen India were excited at the thoughts of what lay before them ; those who were returning to India were full of thoughts of the better things they were to do this time. Everyone was on tip-toe ; but Evan Lee and Lady Meara were at a higher pitch than any. Lee was longing for this last great talk, but fearful that something might happen to prevent it : he was in agony all day long. And Lady Meara was high strung too. She was a woman who admitted no single other person to the inner depths of her soul : that was a sanctuary which had hitherto been inviolate. But in Lee she had for the first time in her life found someone in whom she could confide. Or perhaps it was that for the first time she had found the circumstances favourable for confidence. Or perhaps again it might have been that only now were both the occasion and the person combined together. Anyhow it would be to her untold relief to confide to some other person what her soul was so full of, and what she was pining to tell, but which was too utterly sacred to speak of to anyone who would not fully understand.

After dinner Lee was on tenterhooks lest at the last moment some slight hindrance should intervene. The

time seemed endless before they could both disengage themselves from the others. But he trusted implicitly in her social skill to arrange matters ; and presently he heard her, in her queenly way, say :

"Now I'm not going to stop here amusing you lazy people any longer. I'm going star-gazing with Captain Lee. He's the only one of you who knows a star from a starfish ; and this is the only chance I have of seeing stars. So I shan't waste any more of my time upon you !"

"Oh, don't be so hard upon us, Lady Meara," said someone. "We love stars. Do let us come with you."

"No. You're only fit to play bridge. But I shall see you all again to-morrow morning, and then I shall expect you to tell me how very nice I've been to you upon the voyage and how much you'll miss me."

With that she sailed away, laughing and waving her hand to them.

"You did that splendidly," said Lee, much relieved at her adroitness. "You do things with such grace. It's a treat to watch you."

"Thank you ; but I half meant what I said in chaff. Most of them don't have souls above bridge, and I can't be with them always. Besides, the more I see of society the more sure I am that we *must* fight for our own individuality. I *will* not be of the herd. I'm determined to be myself. And my experience has been that if I can get away by myself now and then, or if I can be alone with some congenial soul, I'm inclined to be much more sociable afterwards. So society gains as well as myself. I love society just as much as I love being alone or with a single friend. But I'm much better in society if I fight against being swamped by it and being herded about in a crowd, doing and saying exactly as everyone else does. I might just as well be a sheep as be like that."

"A sheep is the last thing we would think you are like," said Lee. "I never knew anyone who was more really herself."

"But don't think I like being what is called unconventional," said Lady Meara. "I loathe and detest unconventionality and Bohemianism and 'originality' and all other forms of personal vanity. They are often more bumptiousness and want of discipline than anything else. I abide strictly by certain fundamental social laws; I keep closely within them and will not be led outside. But *within* those laws I fight furiously for my freedom. It's the only way. We're social beings: we are not separate individuals; and we must both keep to society's laws and maintain our freedom."

Then changing her tone to one of very great seriousness and deepest feeling, she said with evident nervousness:

"Captain Lee, I'm almost afraid to keep the promise I gave you last night. I can hardly string myself up to it. It means laying bare my whole soul to its very depths. I've never yet done that to anyone; and I don't know how I shall bring myself to do it now. And yet I'm longing to—longing with my whole being; so I will not flinch. Only I ask of you not to say a word while I'm unfolding my soul: you must let me speak as the words come out of it, and confidence will perhaps come to me as I go on."

Lee felt the whole atmosphere between them tense with concentrated feeling. He dared not move or speak: he almost held his breath, and just waited on her. He could feel himself being finally tested against the radiance of her beautiful soul: she would not be aware of it, but that was in fact, what was happening; and he knew it. Then by the subtlest change in the tone of her voice as she proceeded he knew that he had stood the test, and had not been found wanting. The tension was over:

confidence and intense pride in himself flowed into him; and from that moment onward gossamer threads were drawing them closer and closer together, and irrevocably binding their souls.

"Let us come to the rail," she said, "and look over the side of the ship. Then there will be nothing but you and the sea and the sky and the stars and this soft warm air passing through us. There will be nothing to distract me, and I shall be able to speak out freely.

"And I take you into my confidence, Captain Lee, not only because you can understand me, but because I can trust you with my treasure. It's a fearful risk to take, but I've made up my mind to take it and I know I shall be right.

"I told you last night my ideas about the soul—about my soul, anyhow. Well, I've always felt my soul working like that in me. I've been about in society most of my life, and in country houses where there are generally numbers of people, and I've led what is called a 'worldly' life and have liked it: it's not so bad as it's painted. But two things happened to me which together caused me to have a burning passion for God; and made me pine for perfection in everything—especially the perfection of holiness. It has been almost a mania with me: it has been an agony to me to be anything short of the best. I must have it; and I've struggled and prayed for it and called upon God to help me. And I've fought hard for the utmost purity in body, mind, and spirit. I've striven to be absolutely spotless and free of all uncharitableness in any shape or form, to have not one evil thought or evil desire. I've set my heart upon being holy before God, and I've felt He would not brook a single imperfection as I appeared before Him: I must be whole perfect in every way. Often I've felt abject and miserable at the thought of how despicable I am

in comparison with what I ought to be, but I've striven on.

"The first of the events to which I've referred was the death of my father. I had adored him; and always he had been so vital and vigorous, so kindly and full of good cheer—even though he was over seventy. Then came a fatal illness, and as I was taken to see him before the coffin was finally closed, I was filled with a fearful awe. I was not *afraid*, exactly, for his dear face was so full of peace—almost of joy; but it was so still and so pale that I trembled with awe. I had never looked on death before. The room seemed filled with some mighty Presence which had in its hands the power of life and death. It had brought us into being, but it had also fixed the term of our being, and I felt bowed with reverential awe before it.

"This death of my dear father had been a dreadful blow, for he had been much to me; but on the whole my life had been in pleasant ways till, of a sudden, a terrible tragedy occurred which almost cut my life short altogether. I had only just experienced the very sweetest joy a woman can have—sweeter far than any I had imagined possible—the birth of a little boy—when, without a warning, he was taken from me. Agonies and agonies I suffered. I craved and longed and cried every moment of the day for my darling: he was so beautiful, and would have been such a precious treasure to me all my life—and now he was gone. My very life seemed to be gone too. All of me went out to my little one; and he was not there. I had nothing left in me for anything else, and felt listless and empty, and did not know how I should ever be able to face the world again. Such hopes I had built up on him, and now they were shattered. And my faith in God wavered too. It seemed so senseless. Why give my darling if he was to be taken away almost as soon as given?

“But slowly, very slowly, a change did come over me. Never through all my life shall I forget my little darling. I think of him every day. But I simply could not always keep myself to myself. Selfishly indulging my grief only spoiled the life of others. I had to think of my husband and I had of necessity to pay attention to household affairs and begin to go about in the world again. I had obligations to others that I must discharge. And with all my sorrow there did come to me also a most wonderful experience of the sympathy of others. There was, I found, far more love—and kindly, really thoughtful love—in the world than I had ever known of before. I had found that out to some extent on my engagement and wedding when I was astonished to see how glad people were at my happiness. It was the same now that I was in grief: they seemed to feel my sorrow almost as I did myself. I shall always gratefully remember it.

“Well, Captain Lee, that great joy in marriage, that feeling of awe and reverence I had in the presence of death when my father died, that quite heavenly joy I felt when my little one came, and then the dreadful, tearing grief of losing him, and afterwards this wonderful sympathy which everyone showed—all these things changed me much. They loosened and melted me. I became more flowing and fluid. I used to be too stiff and hard and unyielding. I would take it for granted that all would go well with me, and I did not realise the griefs and pains of others. Now my heart went aching out to all who suffered. And gradually I came to realise that my sorrow had at least done this for me, that it had made me more loving—more considerately and sympathetically loving. It had made me, too, much more sensitive and vastly increased my *capacity* for love. I entered more readily into the joys and griefs of others. I was so much more truly glad when they were glad,

and joy and happiness had come to them; and I had so much more feeling for them when they were in grief.

"And then came this yearning to know more about this Power upon which we are so dependent. So I began to read books of philosophy and science and religion, and whenever I could I went off by myself to be with Nature and absorb her beauty; and at those times I did feel as if I had got nearer God. I felt it also when I was playing the organ in our own little chapel quite by myself.

"And then came this marvellous experience which I want to tell you about, as you are seeking to know what God is like, but which I've told no one of till now—though I should like to have told *everyone*—the whole world. It was its very sacredness that held me back—that and the almost impossibility of describing it in words. It's as hard as describing the dawn to one who had lived only in the night. Suppose our lives lasted but a single day, like some flies' lives, and that we were born just after sunset and through half our life had seen only starlight, like you and I see now, and that, when our life was half spent, dawn began to appear and eventually the sun rose, what an incredible wonder it would appear! And how impossible to describe to those who had only seen starlight! That's exactly how I felt after I had had my experience: it seemed impossible to describe to those about me. But I think I can make you understand it because I believe you already see the dawn."

"Yes, Lady Meara, I believe I just do. Sometimes I dimly discern it lightening ahead of me in wonderful radiance. Still I have not actually seen it yet."

Lady Meara paused, either to collect herself for the effort or in one final hesitation before she at last told her secret to another. Then, leaning against the rail and looking far away out to the horizon,

and speaking in a very low and in a very deep and marvellously sweet tone which clearly came up from the very heart of her soul, she continued :

“ I have said that for years I had been yearning and striving after God. Well, one day when I was away by myself on the moors, absorbed in all the beauty of Nature and feeling my whole heart going out in thanksgiving to God, there suddenly came upon me a delight of love past all possible endurance. It was God *returning* my love. It was God loving *me*. I had *won* his love. It was like one who had loved and worked for his country all his life at last feeling his country *returning* his love—like Queen Victoria must have felt on her Jubilee Day, when she knew she had *won* her country’s love. It was like that, but how infinitely greater ! It came surging into me, coursing through and through me with overpowering ecstasy. It filled me with a tingling, palpitating life of such fearful intensity I could hardly endure it. My poor body seemed too utterly frail for so stupendous a power to force its way through. I was filled to the very brim, and could contain no more. But oh ! the rapture of joy, the holy ecstasy ! That was past all telling. The greatest human loves were pale and thin beside it. It was something so sacred I almost fear to speak of it even now.”

Lady Meara paused once more, absorbed in a kind of reverie and gazing intently over the sea and Lee feared to say a word. Then she continued :

“ It was the experience of a lifetime. But it did not leave me broken down, absolutely shattered to pieces, with my nerves all frayed, as you might have expected it would. For days and weeks after I was in a state of exuberant elation. It was not quite like being on fire, but I felt glowing with a kind of heavenly light that had all the purity of fire ; and I felt both calm and also living at prodigious speed.

I was alive as few ever are—intensely, vividly alive. Every faculty was at concert pitch. Ordinary life was cow-like in comparison. Life glowed and sparkled; and shone and sang and seethed within me. I worked at lightning speed. And I seemed to expand to infinite distance till I filled the whole world: in some kind of way I seemed to *include* the whole world—the whole world seemed included in me. And it seemed fired through and through with the same love that was glowing in me—the same light and joy and gladness and that supreme exaltation for which no word has been found. Glory and majesty there were, too. And yet with all this splendour and with all the incredible speed at which life moved there was the most exquisite peace and a quiet holy sweetness. The world seemed to be some heavenly anthem, and my soul sang its song all the day long. My life was the fulfilment of every hope and of every highest need of the soul.

“And certain as I am that I was experiencing God—that God was revealing Himself to me and filling my being to its very depths and its furthest tips till I felt bursting with God—yet the extraordinary thing is that all the time I felt most absolutely myself, and as if I had never really been myself till then. It seemed as if I had been stung to be my real self. I had no sense of being submerged and absorbed: I was at white heat; I lived in seconds what others would take years to come up to or never reach at all; and I could see in a flash what others would ponder over for months. God was manifesting Himself through me, but it was I who was manifesting God: I was myself all the time. He needed me as I needed Him—that is the feeling I had. I was not swamped by God as the ocean swamps a drop of rain: I remained always myself, and was never more myself and had never hitherto been anything like myself. And my consciousness was increased to an infinite degree. I

became, I suppose, conscious of God—conscious of the world as a whole."

"That is just as a cell in my brain might become conscious of me," said Lee; "conscious of me as a whole—of my whole self."

"Yes, it must have been something like that," replied Lady Meara. "And now I could love with a love I had never dreamed of before. Everything and everybody was laid bare before me: I could see through them like glass. I could see the essential spirit of each. At a glance I could distinguish the good from the bad and the important from the unimportant; and the good always shone out as so much more important: it simply scorched evil away. And I suppose I must have been so glowing with this heavenly love that was in me that I seemed to draw everyone to me; and I could kindle into flame the faintest flicker of love in any who came near me. Perhaps I may have repelled some while I attracted others. That I do not know. But always I felt that it was the God in me that was attracting."

"And I was as sensitive and responsive as the most delicate compass. It was not only that I sharply distinguished the good from the bad: I was acutely aware of *degrees* of good; I could instantly detect the best and at once appreciate its value. I shuddered and shrank from the bad, but I had a passion for the best. It had an irresistible attraction for me, and I flew to it. I could see in an instant, too, the right thing to do, and the right way to do it. When I was confronted with a situation I would leap to meet it. Mind and soul worked with incredible swiftness and marvellous accuracy."

"I can understand that," said Lee, "for when we are under strong emotion our minds do act more quickly: the stronger the emotion the quicker the thought."

"And life was all music, my whole soul was singing

and loving," continued Lady Meara. "I felt melted and flowing. A kind of holy glamour lay over all around me. I could see beauty in the meanest things. And though I had experience which seemed to make me wiser than the wisest I felt as innocent as a child : my whole outlook seemed just that of a child : I looked out with the same open eyes, the same freshness, the same eager curiosity, delight, and wonder—the same but intensified a hundred-fold.

"And often now I feel like a child wandering about by herself in a new great wonder-world, longing for someone to talk to about the delights she sees, but having no one who will understand her. All my friends are to me like dear good faithful animals. I love them and they love me ; but they cannot understand my language when I talk to them of the delights I see. They can only see I'm pleased, and that makes them pleased too ; but they can't share in my enjoyment any more than a faithful old dog can share in the enjoyment his master feels in seeing a sunset. This makes me very lonely at times, but I'm certain there must be others, if only I could find them, who could understand me, and I believe that you're one, Captain Lee."

"Perhaps I can a tiny little, Lady Meara, and I'm sure I shall fully some day. I've never had such an experience as yours, but I know it will come to me. I feel already almost catching it. It *must* be contagious ; and anything divine like that must in the end spread like colour has spread ; more of us will catch this glow of Holiest Love from you. You will kindle into flame that divine spark which is at the core of every man's soul. But one question may I ask ? After you had had that supreme experience, didn't you feel all the humdrum details of ordinary life most irksome ? Wasn't it fearfully hard for you to take part in the common life of society ? "

"To speak honestly, it was, Captain Lee. Much

of life seemed paltry and meaningless, and I would long to be away by myself on the downs, watching the sky and the clouds and feeling myself with God again. But I soon realised that I must master this feeling ; I must keep an iron discipline over myself, or it would become pure self-indulgence, and I would lose God. For God is not only in the sky and clouds and birds and flowers, but in men—and in men far more than in any other object. The round of social life does, I admit, seem trivial, and much of it I shrink from and much is repulsive to me ; and I couldn't live at all if I were not able to get away sometimes and be absolutely by myself in the garden or in the woods or out on the downs ; but I'm a very sociable being all the same, and I take a great pride in having my home as perfect as I can make it. I just say to myself that I will put this Holiest Love which God has given me into whatever I do and try and concentrate myself upon what I'm doing, and then all sense of the tiresomeness of life goes.”

“ But like the rest of us, Lady Meara, you must have many petty worries and disappointments and disheartenings ? ”

“ I do, indeed, and it's maddening just when I'm tuned to something good and lovely, to be worried about some difficulty with the servants or some little social offence which I must avoid causing. But I cling on tight to the fact—and fact it is—that this Holiest Love is at work in the world. And I've come to make it a matter of honour with myself that I shan't give way to petty irritation. Heaven knows it's hard enough ; and I don't pretend that I always succeed ; but I lose caste with myself, as you say in India, if I fail ; so I try to make the effort.”

“ Lady Meara, I simply can't say how deeply touched I am that you should have confided in me. And please do know that I'll ever keep this as a most sacred precious trust.”

"I know you will, Captain Lee : I feel I can trust you. It was a fearful effort to get myself to speak about it ; but after our talk last evening I thought my experience might be a help to you. I don't know how I ever came to speak about it, but it's a tremendous relief now I've told it to someone. Only you mustn't think my life is all rosy and sunlit as I've described. There are stormy days, too, and horrible, dull, murky days as well. But the point is that in the world *always* and *somewhere* there *are* these rosy days. When all is dull with me in England it may be bright for you in India. Someone or other will always be having experiences such as I had. God is the very heart and soul of the world and ever active : He must be manifesting Himself like this in some person somewhere at all times. So I don't lose heart in the dull grey days. I know it's shining elsewhere. And having had this experience I know how much God does really love me, as the Queen after the Jubilee must have known always afterwards how much her country loved her. That is my form of 'faith in God.' "

"I must learn to look upon it too like that," said Lee, "and learn, also, how to appreciate and make the most of these heavenly days when we have them. It's a matter of having the soul to see. You have an exquisitely refined soul, and can see all kinds of beauty that I am blind to. But after this talk I shall see far more than I ever saw before. What you have confided to me will be of the greatest help. Already I understand God better."

"Oh ! you do make me so thankful, Captain Lee. I've longed that my experience should be a help to others. I hated keeping it all to myself. As I said before, I had been pining to tell about it to someone else and talk about it ; but I haven't dared to. I've been like I was when I first fell in love with my husband : I wanted everyone in the world to know of

my happiness and share it with me, but I shrank from speaking about it to a single soul. And I shrank still more from speaking of this experience of God. But even now I want you to keep it a secret between you and me. I would like everybody to know of it in time, but it must be only in the holiest way or it will be misunderstood and irretrievably damaged. That is what I most fear."

"And you quite rightly fear," Lee said. "Very few people will understand you, and the precious treasure may be bruised and crushed like a delicate flower under the foot of a clod-hopping boor."

For a time they paused in their talk and looked silently out to sea, and then Lady Meara began again :

"I've felt so solitary up till now, Captain Lee, so lonely in all spiritual matters. But now I know I have you with me. We may never meet again. Perhaps it is better that we shouldn't. But that will not greatly matter : we're now together, and we'll always remain together ; we can't really be parted. There will be one in the world who understands me and that alone is of indescribable comfort. And I shall be able to feel there is one whom my deepest life is helping : I need no longer have the feeling that it is all being thrown away. And what I've told you will help you, too, to experience God. That experience won't come to you in the same way as it came to me. Every time we see beauty we see it in a different form ; and it's the same when we see God. But you'll experience God in some form and you'll think of me."

"Indeed I shall, both then and always."

"But what troubles me now, Captain Lee, is how I can get everyone to share this holy joy which I have had. It's a great problem for me how to communicate it. What do you think I ought to do ?"

"Can't you *write* about it ? If you don't care to

publish in your own name you might write anonymously, or you might write for private circulation."

"But I've never written anything and how could I begin by writing on so great a theme?"

"You could quite easily, I'm sure, for you are so gifted and you would be feeling so intensely what you were writing about. But if you say you can't write, could you express yourself in music?"

"I can, in a way, when I'm by myself at the organ; but I couldn't put it on paper."

"Well, in the last resort there is the best way of all, and in that way you most certainly can express yourself."

"What is that?"

"In your life—by living a life that will express in it all you have felt. You are doing that already, but you can do it more deliberately in future. In fact, such an experience as you've had *can* only be communicated to others in life: writing and music are quite inadequate. By your life you'll show what you've found of God. And every now and then you'll find someone, as you've found me, to whom you can speak about it; and we shall carry on your message in our own way. Each will try his best to live the best life ever lived."

"You're perfectly right I see, Captain Lee, and I'll do as you say. But it'll be hard—terribly hard—to live a life that will in the least express what I've known. Still I owe it to God to do it, and I'll make the effort. And I shall feel you helping me and expecting it of me."

She paused a little and then continued:

"Captain Lee, you and I've been drawn together in a way that to me is utterly sacred. I feel as if our souls were in perfect communion, and as if what was binding them together was something springing straight from the heart of the world, and sending us soaring together to heaven's own heights. Though

we may not meet again we'll always dwell one in the other. I shall feel you in me, and I want you to feel me with you. Our souls belong to each other. And whenever we reach up after the best in life we shall feel each encouraging the other. And I shall thank God every day of my life for this treasure He has given me."

The evident restraint with which she spoke gave the impression of infinitely more left unsaid and added sweet poignancy to her words. Lee, too, felt the restraint which it was imperative to exercise : it was only through the strictest self-control on either side that the highest heights could now be attained. So all he could say was :

" Lady Meara, I shall always, always feel you with me. Because of what we've been together in these few sacred moments I'll go on with my life with far greater heart than ever before ; and whenever I'm straining after the best I'll feel you working in me and with me and cheering me on. I shall not see you again : we could never afterwards be as now. But I know you'll be taking pride in me, and I mean never from now to do anything unworthy of this sacred communion between us. May God for ever bless and keep you."

She gave him her hand and he bent over it and kissed it very, very reverentially. Then she quietly left him, and as she said " Good night " her face was glowing with divinest love. She had by nature an entrancing smile, telling of a love toward all men, but now it was a very angel's : it came straight from God Himself ; and Lee had the feeling that for the moment he was looking on the face of God. It was but for an instant and then she turned away. But the look she gave settled for him all things in earth and heaven. It pierced straight through his heart to the profoundest recesses of his soul. It thrilled him through and through till his body seemed to

have dissolved away, and he was nothing else but holiest love.

She passed along the deck and disappeared, while he remained quietly where he was, with the wide sea before him and the stars shining brightly above. He never saw her again ; but henceforward she coloured all his life with heavenliest blue. She inspired all his loftiest thoughts and deeds. And this she knew, for Truman told her. And Lee knew that she knew. And sweet peace abided between them.

CHAPTER XIX

RONNIE MOSTYN

AFTER the usual bustle and jostling and shouting, the tipping of stewards, the shepherding of wayward baggage, and the hunting of passengers to whom one wants to say Good-bye, which always follow the arrival of a liner in port, Lee caught the mail train to Umballa, where his regiment was now stationed, and after two days and nights of crowded travel once more drove up to the Mess.

Vivian had succeeded to the command, and heartily welcomed Lee. "My wife is with me now, so you and I can't share a bungalow together again; but I've arranged with Ronnie Mostyn to take you into his bungalow. He has been back a few months, and wants someone with him. You'd better go over there now and we'll have a talk later."

"You and I'll have to put up with each other," said Ronnie to Lee, as he showed him round the bungalow. "I've got hold of a fairly decent one, but the best of these damned bungalows isn't any better than a cowshed. They can be kept fairly cool in the hot weather, but in the cold weather they're regular ice houses. With the verandahs all round you never get a ray of sunshine in and they're beastly unhealthy, I hate them. D'you know Umballa?"

"No. I've never been here before. But I've always heard it's a good station."

"Yes, it is; it's easy to get away from. You can get to Meerut and Lahore very easily; up to Simla

too, now the railway is built. There's good shooting about in the district ; and we'll have a good time here this cold weather, for the 9th Hussars always keep things going : there'll be plenty of polo and racing."

At mess that evening Lee found a great difference. Mess dinners had usually been dull ; but with Ronnie back everyone was lively. He was the best company anywhere, full of good stories, the life and soul of whatever circle he found himself in, discussing horses, discussing men, discussing any mortal thing, criticising freely but never running anybody down—always cheery and jolly. Every set he was in always centred on Ronnie : he was the natural leader wherever he went.

After dinner, while most of the officers were in the billiard-room, the Colonel told Lee to bring a chair up by him and have a talk.

"We shall have heaps to do this cold weather," he said ; "the General's very energetic, and we've this camp of exercise coming on, and here at Umballa every red tab in India passes through on the way to Simla and likes to show a little trade by inspecting us at something or other."

"Well, Sir, I'm game for any amount of work. I've come out full of buck."

"I know you'll work hard, and I've given you B Company. It wants pulling together, and I look to you to bring it into shape. I don't want to talk shop, though, here in the mess : we've quite enough of that on parade and in orderly room. What I want to speak to you about is Ronnie Mostyn. I got him to take you into his bungalow, because I thought you two would get on together. He's dead keen on everything to do with a horse, and is a cheery good fellow and all that ; but there's another side to him which most people don't know of ; and he'll take to a quiet fellow like you."

"I'm glad to hear you say so, Sir, for to tell the truth I had been afraid he would find me dull. I'm not so wrapped up in horses, and I've not been about the world like he has; and I was afraid he would find we had not much in common."

"There you make the mistake. Ronnie has done a lot besides racing. He came out top in that and now he's looking further afield—especially since he's been in Africa. He's interested in big questions of Imperial policy. He manages to hold his own in conversation with every kind of person; and when he was A.-D.-C. to the Viceroy he would talk as readily with the Viceroy as with another A.-D.-C., and the Viceroy would enjoy his talk—it was so pithy and pointful."

"I'm sure we shall get on, Sir, and I've always enormously admired Ronnie from a distance."

"But I've a motive behind all this," said the Colonel. "I'm not thinking only of you and Ronnie: I'm thinking of the regiment. Ronnie is the best fellow in the world; but he's too restless, and between you and me he's very intolerant at times. He's continually on the look out to be off on some show in West Africa, East Africa, this Indian frontier—anywhere where there's likely to be a scrap. And if there's no fighting going on he's wanting to be off to race meetings, horse-shows, polo tournaments. He's such an active-minded fellow he finds this ordinary regimental grind frightfully irksome. He applies for leave, and I grant it whenever I can; but I have to think of you other fellows and the regiment as well as him, and I can't always see my way to letting him go, even if it is for some expedition; and when he's refused you would think the whole world had come to an end. He's, of course, always perfectly polite and respectful to me: that's one of Ronnie's good points; he's never rude however outspoken he is, and he has beautiful manners; but there's no

mistaking that he gets impatient. And I wish we could get him reconciled to regimental grind, for he's a fine officer when he does buckle to. He gets more out of the men than anyone. He damns them to any extent when they go wrong. But they take it from him and will do anything for him. He's a great asset to the regiment, too, and we're all very proud of being called Ronnie Mostyn's regiment."

"Yes, I know Ronnie is a bit intolerant," said Lee. "I've often heard fellows laughing at stories of his indignation when he has been told that he can't be spared. But I've heard, too, that he shows himself so grateful for anything that is done for him that you can hardly help doing it just to get his gratitude."

"Certainly I wouldn't refuse him leave if I could help it, for it's never for any playing about in a rotten way at a hill station that he wants it, but always for something sporting. But I wish we could get him keen on regimental work."

"Very well, I'll try, Sir," said Lee. And, the Colonel not wanting him any more, he went off to his bungalow.

His return among his brother officers had forced Lee to think of other things; but when he was at last alone in his bungalow that night his mind at once sprang back to Lady Meara. Since the last evening with her a curious ecstasy had been on him. From time to time during the days in the train, deep gulps of unplumbable sadness had welled up within him. He had barely sipped of the sweetest thing in life when the cup was taken away. But from out of the depths there arose, too, a joy which triumphed over every other feeling and which sadness only sharpened. Her glad spirit was now spurring him on, and expecting of him that he should come up to the best of himself he had revealed to her in those few sacred

moments together. Under a common impulse, springing direct from the primal Source of All Things, purest womanhood and manhood had then met and stirred each other. She and he might never meet again, but their souls were wedded, and together they would dedicate themselves to the holiest things in life. In this lay the ecstasy which had been lifting him heavenward. And as he now stood in his room, with his hands clasped tightly together and his head bowed devoutly, he prayed with all his soul that he might be worthy of this love which had so graciously come, and determined more firmly than ever that for her sake he would be all his best. God was now with him, indeed. Already he was feeling more sure of himself—more of a man, stronger and more competent. Twinges of piercing sadness had shuddered through him from time to time; but he bore them unflinching and determined to throw his whole self manfully into the work which now lay before him.

Next morning he had a good talk with Tennington, who was now Adjutant. “Delighted to see you back, Wellington,” said the Tiger. “I’m up to my eyes in work, and I’d be so grateful if you’d relieve me of some. During the hot weather I could manage to get on with the Dramatic Club and the Athletic Club and *Devonshire Cream*, but now the drill season is on the adjutancy takes up far too much of my time. I can still manage the Dramatic Club, for that’s mostly in the evenings and it’s rather work that I’m cut out for. But could you relieve me of the Athletic Club and take on *Devonshire Cream*?”

“Of course I will. You’ve been a brick doing as much as you have.”

“Well, I’ve liked it. It has been a grind, but I really do think it has got the men going and kept them out of mischief. Certainly we’re the cleanest

regiment here in Umballa, and these Simla people give us great kudos for it."

"All right: I'll take on that job and now I must get over to my company, for I've a lot to do there," said Lee.

"You're looking very fit, sergeant," said Lee to his colour-sergeant as he arrived in barracks. "Have you got through the hot weather all right? Tell me what you've been doing lately."

"I got up to the hills for two months, Sir. May and June were awful here. Those scorching dry winds day after day. Not a drop of rain, and everything dry as tinder. In July came the rain and we blessed it at first, but then it went on and on and we wanted the dry weather back. And it was so beastly damp and sticky you were covered with sweat, even if you kept still and never moved a foot. I got fever, too, and felt pretty bad altogether, when luckily the Colonel sent me up to Dagshai and I soon got right. It rained hard there, too, at first, but in the beginning of September we got a fine day or two. Then some sharp heavy showers, and about the middle of the month it cleared altogether and I've never seen such perfect weather as we had then. Sunshine day after day, and the air quite cool and fresh. I used to walk about the hills, and am very well now, thank you, Sir."

"You've the whole cold weather before you now, too. But I'm going to work you hard, sergeant, for we have to make this company the smartest in the regiment. I know the non-commissioned officers and also a good many of the men from the time when I was Adjutant, but I want to know them better. You must tell me about them as we go along. Musketry training would be a good time for that. I'm going to be down hard on any slackness; but I want you to keep on the look out for men who are likely to do well, so that we may bring them on.

We have to be down on the slackers, but we must make men who do well feel that they'll be pushed on. I shall be going round the barracks this afternoon. Tell the orderly sergeant to see that things are clean and in order."

That afternoon—and on a good many other afternoons—Lee had a thorough look round the barracks, the cook houses and stores of his company. He would make the most of his zeal while it lasted, he told Ronnie. He would not pamper his men, he said, but in India, especially, there is so much that can be done to keep them from illness and ennui he felt it his duty to see to them properly.

Here Ronnie was absolutely with him. "Just think of the care we take of race-horses," he said; "how we look after their stabling and of what they have to eat and drink; and we ought to take just as much care of the men. British soldiers in India are precious articles and require careful attention. When training I was made to gallop my horses hard, and when the race was on I used to take the last ounce out of them; and I'm going to do the same with my men. I'll look after them, but I won't spare them when the time comes."

Ronnie himself was perpetually fit. Lee told me once that he looked upon him as the most perfect embodiment of the life in the forest that he had ever met. Since that Christmas with Woods he had been on the look out for someone displaying that alertness and alacrity which the forest demands—someone "all there" and always "all there." No one fulfilled this ideal like Ronnie. In body he was tall and slim, wiry, lithe, and sinewy, deep in the chest and powerful in the arms, and both erect and supple. In mind he was alertness itself. His eyes were as keen as a hawk's and absolutely fearless. In addition they were irresistibly compelling.

And this attractiveness of Ronnie's combined with

his daring was the noticeable thing about him. Soon after Lee's return he was dining with the 9th Hussars, and the man he was sitting next to at dinner told him much about this side of Ronnie. "I used to see a good deal of him racing," said Redford. "There's very keen rivalry on the turf, and in a race we'd try to get the best of one another—within the rules of course—but we were all devoted to Ronnie. They were all good fellows—Buntz Bing, Harty Pingfield, and the rest—but Ronnie was the pick of the bunch. I had a bit of a row with him one day though. We were riding a gallop together and my horse shied, and barged into him. He was furious. 'Where the hell are you coming to?' he shouted. 'You're no better than a sack of potatoes on a horse.' I was equally furious at being spoken to like this and went up to him after the gallop and asked him if he really meant what he said. 'Yes I did,' roared Ronnie. 'You're a damned bad rider or you'd have your horse in hand.' My back was properly up now, and I let fly at him. But Ronnie hated a row—any lasting kind of row—and he put his hand on my arm and said: 'You're not really angry with me, dear old boy?' And I replied: 'No, of course not, you silly old juggins: no one could be angry with you for five minutes at a time.' And that is just it about Ronnie. He blazes with indignation at one moment, and when he's angry he has a pretty rough tongue; but it's all over the next, and there's never any sting left."

"That's what I've noticed about him already," said Lee, "he's very direct and outspoken about any person or any subject, but he never leaves a raw. He must have been a great fellow racing, wasn't he?"

"Absolutely undefeated," said Redford; "he'd stick at nothing. He's really a very highly strung fellow, but once he was off you'd think he had no

nerves at all. He has the pluck of a boar. But he has rare judgment too, and was a great artist racing. You never caught him napping, and you never caught him doing the ill-judged or inartistic thing. He observed everything, and could discriminate to a nicety. He understood his horses and knew their powers and their temper, and could manage them. He had a perfect natural seat and wonderful hands. A great tearing horse he could keep under perfect control; and he could coax an unwilling animal as well as handle a rogue. I always notice, too," continued Redford, "that he had the same gift with men. He's as good a judge of a man as he is of a horse. And he's a great diplomatist: he's full of resource, and can find his way out of any situation. You're lucky to have him in your regiment."

"I quite agree and we're very proud of him. And what one notices is the way he makes his mark wherever he goes and whatever he does. He has strong opinions on men and events, and he has the courage of them and expresses them with force; and this being so sure of himself impresses men and they follow his lead. They take up what he takes up. We all do what Ronnie does—or try to. We even wear his own particular collars."

"They do all over England now," said Redford. "And what is just as remarkable as the way in which he makes his mark everywhere is his popularity. Not a soul would know who you meant if you spoke of 'Mostyn'; but 'Ronnie' is known to every man in England."

This conversation suggested to Lee the idea of getting Ronnie to write out his racing reminiscences for *Devonshire Cream*. "I won't bore you," Lee said to him, "but at odd times in the bungalow you might talk away to me and I'll jot down what you say and make up three or four articles." Ronnie

good-naturedly agreed, and the numbers of the paper with the articles in them were sold all over India—and in England too. The men in particular loved them.

In another direction also—and that a most important one—Ronnie did a great service. With what was being done in the regiment about women he thoroughly agreed. "I'm as much a man as any," he said; "but I'm damned if I'm going to make a beast of myself. And I don't see why anyone should. Men must learn to keep themselves in. They're far fitter if they do." This attitude of his had great influence with officers as well as the men.

So in one way and another Ronnie and Lee had their hands full. Lee worked away at the Athletic Club, and with the numerous regiments round got up matches of all kinds for the men so that they had plenty to occupy and amuse them. And with Ronnie's aid the regiment got together a very useful lot of polo ponies; and, by means of a Polo Club arrangement, officers like Lee who had to live on their pay were able to get a certain amount of polo. The regiment could not compete with any hope of success in the inter-regimental tournament, for they had not the money to pay for the fast ponies required; but Lee had as much polo as he cared for. He was quite an average player, and liked the game because it was short and fast and required dash and skill and nerve, and was an excellent training in team work. But he did not make a fetish of it, for he had so much more to occupy his mind and his time. He indulged in the game as a relaxation and not as a main purpose in life.

Apart from the parades and camp of exercise the culmination of the cold weather season was the Umballa "week," when guests from the different stations round poured in and there were races, a polo tournament, dances, big dinners at the various messes, and entertainments of all kinds. There were

some rowdy nights in the messes—steeplechasing over the furniture, tossing fellows to the ceiling in blankets, wild races at midnight round the cantonment, and so on; and gambling among a few. But the fun was clean; there was little drinking and no real vice, and all were fit and healthy, for they had been for some months hard at drills and were day by day engaging in games of some kind or racing. And Lee now saw Ronnie in his element. In all that gathering of the finest soldiers and sportsmen, he was the outstanding figure. Always exactly there, doing and saying the precisely right thing, he moved among his fellows a head and shoulders above them—a man who really counted. With higher officers he was unfailingly deferential: no one did he offend by a single slight. But with all he preserved a perfect freedom: at Eton, in London, and in country-house society, and at a hundred race meetings, he had been used to mixing with the best in every branch of life. He had, therefore, as natural an ease with senior officers as he had with the men in the ranks; and on their part generals as much as privates were glad of a word from Ronnie.

Lee's admiration for him grew without bounds; and when the excitement of the "week" had died down he began to discover in him something of that more serious side of which the Colonel had spoken. Mostyn had spent all his life with horses, hunting, and in the racing set, and his language often savoured of the stables; yet Lee noticed that, outspoken though he was, and direct as a child in his criticism, he never spoke ill of anyone behind his back, and never gave the impression that he disliked a single soul. He had not an enemy in the world: no human being could help liking him. He had a heart of gold; he loved making friends, and for his friends there was nothing he would not do. And his devotion to his mother was part of his very life.

One day he came into Lee's room and looking at his books said : " I see you're interested in religion. So am I, though you mightn't think it. I used to connect it with church-going, dismal services, unintelligible creeds, and a good deal of smugness. I don't read much : I pick up most I know from men. But talking with all kinds of people has made me sure we ought to be religious. I feel very serious about it at times when I'm alone—especially away in the wilds in Africa."

" It's absolutely essential," said Lee. " And to me it's the most interesting thing in life. It deals with foundations : that's what interests me. I never care to talk about it when there's likely to be any irreverence ; but I feel very deeply indeed about it."

" I know you do, old boy, and I admire you for it."

" Well, I would be very barbaric if I didn't. It would be very uncultured not to. There are some idiots who imagine that the world is nothing more than a machine—a sort of gigantic clock ; but how any machine, however complicated, could produce a foal which would grow up into a Derby winner and be the means of producing another foal which would grow up into another Derby winner they haven't stopped to think—or who made the clock and set it going. The idea that the world is mechanical is ridiculous. When we see the wonderful results about us we *can* only assume that working in the world is some spiritual power."

" I suppose that Power is what we call God ? " asked Ronnie.

" Yes," replied Lee.

" I don't know whether I think in the same way as you do," said Ronnie, " but I've always tried to be a good sportsman and a good son to my mother, and I want to do something big for the Empire."

" And what is driving you to do this is the spirit of God," said Lee.

" And do you believe in God protecting us ? "

" Not in the sense that if a bullet were coming straight at you He would deflect its course so that it struck a bad man, or struck a tree. The world would be a very topsy-turvy unreliable affair if that kind of thing happened ; and the whole point is that we can rely absolutely on its working with perfect regularity. I don't believe in deflecting bullets or anything of that sort. But what I'm convinced of is that if we set our hearts on anything good and work for it we shall have the world with us—we shall have the whole impetus of things behind us. They say it's so easy to be bad and so difficult to be good. So it is. But you'll find yourself straight up against the world if you're bad, and you'll have the world with you if you're good. If you had set your heart on being a bad sportsman, pulling your horses, crossing, and performing every iniquity of the turf, you would very soon have found the world against you. As it was, you determined to be a good sportsman and you must have constantly found the world expecting of you to behave in a sportsmanlike way. And when you proved yourself a sportsman, you certainly had the world with you, for you're the most popular man in England. And it will be the same over your present ambition of doing something big for the Empire. If you meant to do something bad for it you wouldn't have got far before you found the world against you. But by big you must mean something of value to the Empire, and you will certainly find the world with you there if you work for what is of value."

" Now you put things that way I can understand. Of course, one *must* feel there is some Spirit driving through the world. And certainly I feel something or other pegging away at me. I'm miserable if I'm not at my best : I must be right at the top. I suppose you would say that that was God working in me."

" Exactly. And you probably feel as pleased and

satisfied with yourself when you *are* at your best as you were miserable when you weren't ? ”

“ I do, you bet.”

“ Well, there you are. You’ve had your reward as you had your punishment. And you’ve felt God working through you to achieve something good.”

“ Really, Evan, old boy, you ought to be a parson. You know so much and put it so clearly we could all understand you. I’ll think a lot about this, for I’m not such a fool as I look. I do care for these deeper things.”

And Ronnie soon brought his root idea into practice : he was perpetually wanting to “ do something ” for Evan, and said one day to Lee, “ I do wish you would let me try and get you a staff billet or on to some expedition somewhere or other. You can’t be for ever grinding away at regimental work. You’re much too good for that.”

“ Thanks, old chap, but the way I look at it is this : any decent Englishman can do the plucky thing on some frontier expedition ; but it takes a lot of doggedness to stick to making one’s regiment fit for service when the call comes ; and that’s the essential thing. I’m all the time longing to be off on jobs like you’ve been on, and I can’t say how much I enjoyed going on that Mission to the Persian frontier ; but, unless I’m asked for, I shall stick to the regiment. And I’ve no ambition to be a staff officer : I like leading men—not being a middle man between a commander and his troops.”

“ Well, you’re a funny chap, Evan, and I can’t make you out.”

“ It’s easy enough if you think of what would happen if every officer was careering about Africa and Asia, and no one took interest in the regiment. The regiment would go to blazes, and when it was called for active service it would be a disgrace.”

“ It’s only an off chance that we do go on active

service, though," contended Ronnie. "If I thought there was a chance of it I'd stick to the regiment."

"Well, in our own time there've been campaigns in Egypt, West Africa, the Sudan, and on this Indian frontier. With an Empire like ours, touching on the possessions of Great Powers all over the world, there are endless causes of friction, and we may be in for a big row at any moment. We won't get warning; and it's not of much use having a lot of plucky adventurous officers if the regiments themselves are not in tip-top order. So I'm banking on the regiment. I'd move heaven and earth to get the regiment on service; but I don't care to be going off on my own—unless, as I say, I am specially wanted anywhere, which is another question."

"And what do you think are the chances of our being called for active service here in India. You've been here some years now and have kept your eyes open. Do you think there's any chance of our seeing service here?"

"I think there is," said Lee. "Our North-west frontier isn't the least bit settled. Afghanistan is always a trouble. There's not a year when we may not be wanted. And I'm all for proving that we British regiments are in the long run the best for frontier warfare. There's a tendency to employ Indian regiments rather than British, because the Indian take less transport and are therefore cheaper, and because they probably have more experience of frontier warfare. That's all wrong: it's bad for our prestige; and it's up to us British regiments to show that we can do with less transport than is thought necessary for us, and that we're better trained and have more stuff behind us in a fight, and are altogether more effective in a campaign than an Indian regiment. That's what I have my eye on. And that's why I slave away at this old company of mine. I shall come to my own in the long run, you'll see."

"You ought to tell that to the big-wigs at Simla."

"I shall some day: it'll be good for their souls. I should like to tell them, too, what I think of their frontier policy. I learnt a lot about that on the Mission. It's very plausible on paper, but there's no backbone in it. Every tribe across the frontier ought to fear us as the devil, and be damned careful how it offended us. They're a wild untamed lot, and we should treat them strongly—not dabble with them. It's some one like you, Ronnie, we want to have on the frontier. Only if we had we should have peace, and there would be no active service for the good old Devonshire Light Infantry. I'll bet you would have them in order double quick. They would soon discover they had a *man* looking after them and would keep quiet."

So this friendship with Ronnie was maturing rapidly. Ronnie never took to soldiering so earnestly as he did: he did not mean to make it the whole purpose of his life. He meant to have as adventurous a time as he could while he was in the service, but to leave it when he had had his fling. Sport was always the love of his heart. But he excelled so brilliantly as a sportsman Lee was drawn to him as he was attracted by excellence in whatever line. And Lee noticed this about Ronnie, that though he was constantly going off on leave whenever he could get it, yet while he was with the regiment his work was always done and done well. He was deadly competent at whatever he did.

But he was not to stay long with the regiment. One day at the end of April he burst into Lee's room shouting, "I've something to tell you, Evan. I'm off to Egypt. There's to be an expedition on the Nile and I'm for it."

"Good heavens! How on earth did you manage to get leave?"

"I haven't. I've applied for it and am starting

on spec. If I don't get it I shall have to come back from Aden."

" Really, Ronnie, you're the very limit ! Here's all I've been doing to keep you with the regiment thrown to blazes. Anyhow, you and I've had a good time together. I shall always remember that."

" So shall I, old boy. And I mean to do something for you. I can't have you sticking for ever at this regimental grind. I feel a beast going away. But I can't give up the chance of a fling."

So off he went. Lee might just as well have tried to keep a hawk in a cage as Ronnie in barracks.

CHAPTER XX

TO THE FRONTIER

WHEN Ronnie Mostyn told Evan Lee that he meant to do something for him he was really speaking of something which he had already done. He had been to Simla ferreting about, as was his wont, for news of possible active service anywhere. He had got hold of the Foreign Secretary and tried to pump him ; and to some extent he had been successful.

“ I have an appointment for which you would be exactly suited if you can speak Hindustani,” said the Foreign Secretary. “ It will mean work of a half political, half military character, very much like what you have been doing in East Africa. Only you would have to be with us for five years certain.”

“ I’m afraid that would not suit me, Sir. I don’t speak Hindustani, and I hardly like to tie myself down for five years. But I know of a man who would just do—Captain Lee, of my own regiment. He speaks Hindustani and Persian well, and he has always been very keen on native life and gets on well with the people ; and he was on that Mission to the Persian frontier two years ago.”

“ I know him well,” said Sir Reginald Denver, who had recently been made Foreign Secretary and knighted, “ but had not thought of him for this appointment. You think well of him in the regiment, do you, Major Mostyn ? ”

"He's the best soldier in it. Very quiet, but with heaps of stuff in him. And the man's not yet foaled who couldn't get on with him."

"I am glad to hear that of him from a brother officer and from one who has had such experience of men as you have. I have always had a special liking for him. What we want for this work is a man who will keep his head and not rub people up the wrong way, and I know Lee has a good manner with Indians. It is not usual to take an officer from a British regiment for frontier work, but it is sometimes done : we have to choose the best man wherever we can get him. You must not mention anything about this to Lee, but I will see what can be done."

The upshot of this conversation was that a fortnight later Lee was summoned to the orderly room to see the Colonel, and was informed by him that the Government of India had applied for his services on the frontier.

"I suppose you have been working this at Simla ?" said the Colonel.

"Indeed I haven't, Sir. I know nothing about it. I've never thought of anything else but sticking to the regiment. I can't make it out."

"Well, there it is. But you will be seconded for five years, so we shall have someone in your place and shall not be short of officers. And personally I would advise you to accept : it will give you some variety of experience, and I know you'll be a credit to the regiment."

"Before accepting I should like to run up to Simla and see the Foreign Secretary, and find out all about it. May I have three days' leave, Sir ?"

"Certainly. But we shall lose you, I know, and I shall be very sorry for it. I never expected to keep Mostyn for long, but I thought you were fairly safe."

"I should never have tried to leave the regiment ;

but when I'm asked for—that is a different matter. I wouldn't be asked for if I were not wanted."

Lee went to Simla, and it was then that he discovered what Ronnie had done for him. He laughed to himself at the turn things had taken. While he had meant to keep to the regiment and keep Ronnie there too, Ronnie had not only slipped away himself, but arranged for him to go as well. Both would be deserting the regiment, when his intention had been that both should remain. However, they would both be serving their country, and that was the main consideration; and that is what both were most keen on.

Lee called at the Foreign Office and saw his old friend, now Sir Reginald Denver. "I'm sorry to trouble you, Sir," he said, "but I wanted to know about this offer for service on the frontier which has been made me. The Colonel thinks I've been pulling the strings up here, but I know nothing about it, and I thought I would like to see you for a few minutes before I finally accept."

"I am glad to see you again, Lee. It was I who chose you for this work, because I know you will do it well. It will exactly suit you. Where we propose to send you is to Chitas on the very far Northern Frontier. It is the point where we approach nearest to Russia, and a year or two back the Russians did actually send an armed force across the passes into Chitas territory and back; and what has been done once may be done again. The people up there are not so fanatical, nor such fierce fighters, nor as well armed as the tribes further south in the North-west Frontier; but they are perpetually fighting one another and making themselves a nuisance generally. We used not to trouble our heads much about them; we let them fight away among themselves as much as they liked; but when the Russians began creeping down from the north we had to take action. If we had remained passive our rivals would have got a

footing among them and caused us an infinity of trouble all along that frontier. So we stepped in and made an arrangement with the Chief of Chitas, by which he undertook to place his foreign relations under us while we on our side undertook to protect him.

“The old Chief has died, though, and there has been, as usual, a scrimmage among his sons and brothers and cousins for the succession. With a little assistance from us, the eldest son has come out top, but he is not a strong man and the whole situation is uncertain, so the Viceroy is sending Mr. Donald, the Political Agent on that frontier, to Chitas, and His Excellency wants you to accompany him. Whether you will remain there after Mr. Donald returns to headquarters or whether you will be employed generally on that frontier will depend upon the turn of events. In any case you will have a very interesting work up there and very important, and I am sure from what I know of you that you will do it well.”

“I will certainly do my best, Sir, and it's work that I shall really like.”

“I ought perhaps to say,” continued Sir Reginald, “that the Viceroy is most anxious to avoid fighting and expeditions of any kind if he possibly can. Out of sheer necessity we have been compelled to make an advance forward, and the opponents of the ‘forward policy’ are continually accusing us of interference and aggression. But to aggress is the last thing His Excellency wishes. He wants to have the frontier quiet and orderly; and in this case the only way to do it has been to advance. But he is most insistent that every officer employed on that frontier should use all his tact and forbearance and foresight to keep the people steady. His Excellency knows it is a difficult task, but he specially selects his officers, and, therefore, expects that they should

make particular efforts to carry out his wishes. They should get to know the people, be accessible to them, and understand them and be extremely tactful and patient with them, as well as firm. A mishandling of a situation may lead to one of our 'little wars.' These cannot altogether be avoided, and the Viceroy would always back his officers up in cases where fighting was an absolute necessity. But he relies upon his officers to keep control of situations as they arise. And if things remain quiet on the frontier you may be sure he will put this down to the good work of his officers and give them credit for it. I should like to talk to you more about this, but I have many people to see now : so come and dine with me at the Club this evening."

At the Club Lee was most warmly received. "I had been hoping to see you before," said Sir Reginald, "but I expect you have been working as hard as ever with your regiment. I was offered the appointment of Foreign Secretary a few months ago, somewhat unexpectedly, and my wife went home to look after the schooling before joining me here ; so I have no house at present or I should have asked you to come and stay with us as you used to. Things did not come off as we would have wished about Nina, but we always think of you as one of us, and you must make our house your home as long as we are out here."

"Thank you so much, Sir Reginald. You and Lady Denver have always been so good to me, and I do feel tremendously grateful to you for your kindness to me ever since I came to India."

"You've heard, of course," continued Sir Reginald, "that Nina is married and settled down at Quetta. There is no one I would rather she had had as a husband than you. But there it is : we can't arrange these things as we would wish. Girls take their own way. I do know this, though, that she felt deeply

having to hurt you as she must have. It made her very unhappy indeed.”

Lee could not trust himself to say anything in reply. But to hear that she felt for him was real balm. He quite realised that he had mismanaged this affair about as badly as he well could have. But it was consolation to know she was not cold and indifferent about him, but was what he had always believed her to be—true and tender-hearted. He had gone through much since he had last seen her, and the wound was no longer raw and open ; but it was still tender, and the first touch on it when Sir Reginald had mentioned her marriage had made him wince. Now, however, that he knew that she did think kindly of him, and perhaps care for him more than she could say, the pain was soothed. And once more that peculiar sense of good won came to him. He had failed in winning her love, but most surely he had won her regard, and the regard of those whose regard was most worth having.

Sir Reginald did not refer any more to the subject, but talked chiefly of the frontier. He told Lee he would be serving under the Political Agent at Dardu, Mr. Donald, who was in charge of that part of the frontier including Chitas.

“ I have never seen Donald,” said Sir Reginald, “ but his reports read well. He seems a shrewd, able man, and he certainly knows these frontier people *au fond* and is up to all their devilries. I told you this morning what we are mainly after on the frontier ; but there is one thing I want particularly to impress upon you. My experience in India has taught me that what matters most is manner. Up here in Simla we may elaborate a perfect policy, but if the officer on the spot has a bad manner in carrying it out disaster follows. Manner is the important thing : policy is of small account. A frontier officer with a good manner will make a bad policy work.

But a bad manner will ruin the best policy. The chief reason why I chose you for this work was because I knew your manner was good."

"I'm glad you think so, Sir Reginald."

"Yes, but you must not let wind go to your head on that account. Your manner is not of your own making. You inherited it from the little Admiral and your mother. So be properly humble and duly grateful. *They* have got you this appointment."

On leaving the Club Sir Reginald put his hand very kindly on Lee's shoulder, and said: "You'll now have the best time of your life. You may be in positions where you will have no one to share responsibility with you: the responsibility will be clearly and directly upon yourself and upon no one else. So you can prove what you are made of. And as I have chosen you for this work I expect you to do me credit. But you will know I appreciate the difficulties you will have, and will give you full credit for any success you achieve. Good-bye, my boy, and the very best of luck to you."

Lee went away beaming with elation. A great load seemed lifted off him. He had not realised till then how severe was the strain upon him to keep interested in peace-time regimental work. Now he would no longer have to do with make-belief and preparation; it would be the real thing. He felt like an arrow shot from the bow—only with this difference, that now he had received the initial impulsion he would have to wing his own way to the mark. Whether he reached it or not would largely depend on himself.

Next morning he rode off at a fast trot to the outskirts of Simla, where he could be by himself for a little and look out upon the mountains. When he had got in among the great graceful deodars he pulled up his pony and sat still in the saddle and looked out over the purple hills in the foreground to the

snowy peaks to the northward. And he thought how far away in the heart of these glorious mountains he would now have to go and help defend the Empire on its furthest confines. And, as always when he was specially strung up, thoughts of those dearest to him came mingling in his mind and merging in the scene about him—his dear ones at home, his lost love, Truman, Ronnie Mostyn, Lady Meara. He did not deliberately call them up: they came rising of their own accord. And with these thoughts of the past and the future there came upon him a strong and firm determination.

He now had his chance: he would make the most of it. Trust was being reposed on him: he would prove himself worthy. He would make a good job of what had been entrusted to him, and show that a British officer *could* keep order and help the people along. The setting was different, but the work was the same in kind as British officers have to carry out on various frontiers all over the world. And it was the same as their predecessors had to accomplish for two or three centuries past, and as their successors would have to do for centuries to come. It was creating order out of chaos by sheer force of personality. He would profit by their experience and by the prestige they had established, and would surpass them all in the art of securing a frontier.

He sat there on his pony feeling life at its richest. The champagne air of the mountains, the glow of the morning sun, the fragrance of the cedars, the sigh of the wind among the tree-tops, and the drone of busy insects, completely harmonised with his inner elation. Again he felt in love with all the world. Life, indeed, was good, and who could wish for better?

He rode back to Simla, made a few purchases of frontier kit and some books, and then returned to his regiment to settle up and say Good-bye.

The Colonel, much to Lee's surprise, expressed the warmest approval of his work with the regiment. As is the way of commanding officers, he had so far dissembled most of his love: now he spoke out emphatically in praise of Lee. The 'sergeant-major, however, was very different. He looked sadly upon Lee. He heartily wished him good luck; but to leave the regiment and to take on with the "civil"—well, he had hoped for better things of Lee!

After leaving the railway his way led for several marches through mountains of the Alpine order of altitude, such as he had been accustomed to in the outer ranges of the Himalaya. But after crossing a pass of 13,000 feet he emerged on to a region dominated by peaks of the order of 25,000 feet above sea-level. One peak, indeed, rose to over 26,000 feet. Ordinary mountains have a different feel about them to mere hills. And about this region there was a different quality from what we find in mountains on the Alpine scale. These mountains were of a grandeur almost past endurance. They rose from narrow valleys in stupendous precipices; and for thousands of feet they were mantled in glittering snow and ice. They were unspeakably sublime; and Lee gloried in their massiveness and strength. He had reached a world built on an altogether nobler scale than any he had known before. And he felt he must himself rise to match the grandeur of the mountains.

I was already at Dardu, the headquarters of the Political Agent on this frontier, when Lee arrived. I had been there for about a year with the escort of two companies from my regiment, the 12th Sikhs, and had had a great time shooting markhor and ibex. And I was thankful Lee was coming, for I had taken a special fancy to him on board ship, and knew he was just the kind of man for handling these frontier people. Some men have this gift. Some haven't. Lee had.

I rode out some way to meet him and he told me what a blessing it was to find someone up here whom he knew, and I found him as usual bursting with enthusiasm to get on to his work. I took him at once to see Mr. Donald, the Political Agent, who received him with great seeming cordiality. But when Lee came to see me afterwards I was surprised to find his cheerfulness had perceptibly diminished.

“ Mr. Donald was very nice and affable,” he said, “ but somehow I don’t like the smell of the man, and he treats me as if I were a child. He was very smiling and full of how glad he was to have me ; but then he proceeded to lecture me upon not being like all British officers and trusting the people. He said the Chitasis were *not* to be trusted. They were very gay and cheery, but they were a treacherous revengeful lot, capable of any cold-blooded cruelty. They hated us, and they hated their own chief because he was supported by us. We young British officers were too innocent and guileless and let Government in by placing confidence in people who ought not to be trusted. He was convinced that an outbreak was inevitable. ‘ I have long had forebodings of trouble,’ he said, ‘ and I am certain they will be realised. And I give you this warning at the start, for I want you to be on your guard. You must never trust the Chitasis—though we must not let them see that we mistrust them.’ That is what Mr. Donald said to me. And I don’t like it. It goes against the grain with me.”

“ It’s just like him,” I said, “ he trusts no one. He doesn’t trust us, and I don’t believe he trusts himself. He’s a good deal older than us, and has much more experience, and he’s an undoubtedly clever man ; but between you and me I’ve never been very comfortable with him either. He’s always very patronising to us officers. He allows we have certain fine qualities which he praises very effusively ; but he treats us

as if we were children, and speaks to us from a great height as if he himself were on an altogether higher level."

"I suppose he must have his good points though, or Government wouldn't have put him here. What has he done?"

"Originally he was an engineer, in the Public Works Department. But he had a great knowledge of these frontier people, and had accompanied one or two missions and so become known to the political authorities. He had also made a journey on his own account into an unexplored valley."

"He has done a good deal then, and he struck me as a clever man though I didn't take to him," said Lee.

"He's clever enough. He's what they call a great conversationalist; and he's a cultured man and writes well. And this taking a cautious pessimistic view of things gives him a great pull with the powers that be. They take the caution for wisdom. If his gloomy prognostications come true he can say: 'I told you so.' And if they don't come true the good result is due to his wonderful way with the people. Pessimism is a jolly paying business."

"Heads I win, tails you lose kind of thing."

"That's about it. But with all his caution he's a very plucky man, only you never can tell when the caution is going to come in. He has extraordinary spasms of it which play the dickens. On one occasion he went by himself in the most daring way to a tribe who had never seen an Englishman before. But on another occasion when he was on a mission he persuaded the head of the mission to scuttle out in the night as he believed they were going to be attacked."

"Old Ronnie Mostyn used to throw caution to the winds at times," said Lee, "and go in and do some extraordinarily brave thing. But Mr. Donald seems

at times to throw bravery to the winds and do the cautious thing at all costs."

"That's it. We never quite know where we are with him—and the people don't either."

Naturally Lee and I had many talks about Donald : juniors do discuss their seniors. But Lee had too fine a sense of discipline and too great a respect for authority to let his dislike enter into any of his official dealings with Donald. Loyalty to his superior officers was bone of his bone ; and any orders he received he carried out in spirit as well as letter. Nevertheless, Lee had too definite an individuality to allow himself to be influenced by Donald's way of thinking, and Donald knew this, and, therefore, thought it all the more necessary to keep dinning his distrust of the Chitasis into Lee. He might have saved himself the trouble. His words ran off Lee as water from a duck's back : Lee was no sponge to absorb anything that happened to be poured upon him.

Soon after Lee's arrival we all three set out for Chitas, a fortnight's march through the mountains ; and being a great deal together on the march and at meals we got to know our chief better. He was always entertaining in his conversation, and had much to tell of life. He was a married man with a couple of children, and was, I believe, popular in society in India. He also took great pains to make himself agreeable to the Chitasis, and wore a perpetual smile. But it was obviously worn : it seldom sprang naturally from him. And Lee and I could not help seeing that the Chitasis kicked against him as children, without knowing why, kick against a teacher who distrusts them.

It was early in January when we three started for Chitas. The mountain sides were bleak and the village lands bare and brown as the mountains. But as we progressed higher heavy snow fell, the

thermometer was below zero, and the fifty Sikhs which composed the escort suffered badly as we crossed a pass 12,000 feet high. It was a severe trial for them; but they had a fine spirit and took pride in showing the people of those parts that they could stand cold as well as any of them.

Descending the far side of the pass we entered Chitas territory. The villages in the upper valleys of the Himalaya are invariably squalid-looking, and their inhabitants are always dirty. The first Chitasis we saw came up to the general rule, and now in the depth of winter were at their worst. Nor did they appreciate having to carry our baggage. And with Donald's running commentary upon their iniquities Lee and I did not get a favourable impression of them at first. However, the people brightened up as they received good payment down on the nail. And Donald, with his native assistant, was able to do much in bringing the somewhat truculent nobility round to us.

As we descended, the extreme cold was left behind. The days were often sunny. And we came in sight of a stupendous mountain, 25,000 feet in height, apparently filling up the end of the valley, though as a matter of fact the river took a sharp turn before it reached the mountain. It was a glorious sight to look upon, and the more welcome because till now the mountains had been close upon us and not of any attractive conformation. They had rather depressed us by their overtopping weight than inspired us by their grandeur. There was no particular distinction in them. Their summits were all on much the same level. No single outstanding peak rose clearly above his fellows. Nothing caught the eye or satisfied the soul. But now only thirty miles away rose Sanchi-tu—massive and proud, towering 5000 feet above every other mountain round, reigning supreme over all and compelling attention. As long

as we had Sanchi-tu to look at and lift us high above all petty worries and discouragements we had nothing much to grumble at.

A few days later we reached Chitas itself, and were met a mile or two from his fort palace by the Nawab and his nobles and a big following. Guns fired a salute, matchlocks were fired in the air, drums beat, trumpets sounded, and noises of every kind were emitted in our honour. The Nawab looked careworn, as well he might be, for he was only just establishing his position, and it was not yet certain what support he would receive from the British Government or what would be expected of him in return, and how his nobles and people would take this connection with us. But I should hardly have described him as "haggard and frightened," as Donald did.

"I have known him before," said Donald; "he's an utter coward. He's a good sportsman. He plays polo well and he's a good shot and devoted to hawking. But he has no nerve. He drinks whenever he can get a chance, and he is sunk in the worst form of Oriental vice."

The people were grave, and more bent on observing us than on displaying any feelings of their own. But they looked less gloomy than the inhabitants of the upper valleys, and neither Lee nor I were badly impressed by them. Certainly there were no scowls or outward signs of animosity.

The fort palace in which the Nawab lived was square in shape with towers at each corner, and was strongly built of stones and wood. For purposes of water supply it was situated exactly on the banks of the Chitas River. The valley was here about a mile wide with mountains of the order of 17,000 and 18,000 feet on either side, and the great Sanchi-tu dominating the whole, thirty-two miles away.

We ourselves were located in a two-storied house

on the edge of a ravine running down to the main river. It was like the other houses in Chitas, built of stone and wood, with a flat roof. There was a big centre room with a square hole in the roof, which served both as window and as chimney. It was the only means of entrance for light (for there were no windows) and of exit for smoke from the fire which was burning in the centre of the room. This was our general mess room, but we lived for the most part in our tents pitched in an orchard behind the house.

“I don’t like this position,” said Donald to us; “it is commanded at less than half a mile. We should have difficulty in getting down to the water in case of attack. There are houses close by which would make little forts in the hands of an enemy. And we must be prepared for attack at any moment. Just across the border in Gulistan is a fanatical mulla, who may turn his followers on us whenever the spirit moves him. The Chitasis look upon their present ruler with contempt; and if his uncle appears upon the scene they may at any time turn against us. So we must prepare plans of defence, collect stores, make loopholes, and be ready for any eventuality. But we must do everything secretly, for we must on no account let the Chitasis know that we distrust them.”

Donald had an anxious time settling the conditions on which the Government of India would recognise and support the Nawab, and much correspondence ensued. Often these Chitasis seemed to be on the point of an outburst. The fanatics from outside seemed ready for an onslaught. And on one occasion Donald informed Lee that he considered the position so risky we might have to retire altogether from Chitas. But Lee strongly protested against any such procedure. And eventually as spring came on and the Chitasis became more cheerful the position eased

itself, and Government authorised Donald's return to headquarters, leaving Lee in charge, with me and my fifty Sikhs as escort. Farewell visits were exchanged, and by the end of March Donald left Chitas to return to headquarters, and Lee remained in charge.

CHAPTER XXI

IN CHARGE AT CHITAS

LEE was now on his own. He was in charge of an important post on the furthest frontier. Responsibility was full on him, and he meant to show his mettle. And in our main attitude toward the Chitasis he would make a change at once.

The Nawab had accompanied Donald for three or four miles. But as soon as he was well round the corner the Nawab and all his following had turned round and galloped off towards Chitas on a wild scamper, laughing and shouting—for all the world like a pack of school children who had got free of a master they suspected. This had been a revelation to Lee, and it seems to have clinched his mind as to the way of treating these Chitasis ; for that evening he said to me :

“ In the matter of *policy* I must abide strictly by the instructions I receive from Mr. Donald. But the *manner* of carrying out that policy rests with me. When I saw Sir Reginald Denver at Simla he warned me to be particular about the manner in which I did things. I have watched Mr. Donald very carefully all the time he has been up here, and I’m not at all satisfied that his is the right one. These people feel instinctively that he suspects them, and with all his good intentions he antagonises them. He does not mean to, but he does. When one man goes to a hive the bees will set on him and savagely sting him. Another can go there, put in his arms and take

them up in handfuls : with him they are perfectly tame. It is the same with these Chitasis. Heaven knows whether I myself am the man for them ; but certainly Mr. Donald wasn't : they were always wanting to sting him."

" What kind of a manner do you think then one ought to have with these people ? " I asked.

" The manner of a good English nurse. Mr. Donald was right in this, that the Chitasis are children. But the people who treat children best are English nurses. We must copy them. If children were left absolutely alone among themselves they would be just as naughty—and cruel at times—as these Chitasis. They would play about and enjoy themselves, and be ever so fond of each other one day, and the next, in some excited mood, they would be perfect little demons and commit every kind of atrocity. All nurses know this. But they don't suspect and dislike the children in consequence. They do, indeed, keep a watchful eye on their charges—a look out which never slackens. They exercise a patience which never tires ; and they are quick and firm to check the first incipient sign of naughtiness. But in the bottom of their hearts they love their little charges. And the children soon find this out : they suppress their naughty tendencies and are orderly and happy. So it comes to this that you and I, Barkley, must take an English nurse, and not Mr. Donald, as our model in shaping our attitude towards these Chitasis."

" You and I are a fine pair to take up the rôle of nurse."

" We are. But remember that we stand for the British Empire. And the British Empire *is* old and experienced in comparison with Chitas. We have that experience behind us, and, therefore, *are* older than these Chitasis. We can do the nurse quite naturally. Some of the children we shall have to deal with will be quite sensible, and we can treat

them well. Others will be rough and unruly, and will deserve a good sound spanking. But always we can remember the English nurse. These people will know quite well when they deserve a smacking, and if it is given with no ill-feeling behind it they will, like children, take it in good part and respect us for it—respect us much more than if we slurred over their naughtiness and took no notice of it. The main thing is, though, that we shouldn't let their naughtiness make us dislike them. We must allow for it: be watchful certainly, but be big enough to look through it to the goodness behind, and that is the part which will eventually come out if we give it a chance."

We now settled down to a quiet enjoyable life. Donald, with all his distrust of the Chitasis, had at any rate come to a firm settlement with them, and they were glad enough to be at peace for a time. Spring, too, was in full flower. In those mountain valleys it comes with a bound: it is winter one week and spring the next. The sun rapidly increases in power. The snow disappears from the valley bottom and retreats higher and higher up the mountain sides. Fresh grass takes its place. Wheat sprouts up in the fields. The willow trees are tinged with green. Little tulips and primulas come into blossom. At the beginning of April the numerous apricot trees round every hamlet burst into bloom as well as peach and pear and apple trees. The valley is a blaze of flowers; and the green plane trees and the poplars are rich with foliage.

And with the spring the spirits of the Chitasis rose. In the winter they had been cooped up in their houses, and had little to do but gossip and plot. Now they had to work. And in their fields in the sunshine, with crops and fruit trees bursting into life all round, they soon became their true cheery natural selves again.

About every other day the Nawab would visit

Lee and sit out in the garden under one of the great plane trees and discuss shooting, polo, India, Russia, England, railways, telegraphs—every conceivable subject. He would never be alone, but always accompanied by twenty or thirty men of position and a crowd of retainers. He himself did most of the talking, bombarding Lee with questions and then holding forth himself. He was very quick-witted, and apt in seeing a point. And he was now continually laughing and in excellent spirits.

Some days he would go off hawking—either for quail or duck. But polo was his chief amusement: two or three days a week he would have a game, Lee generally playing with him; and no one entered into the game more enthusiastically than the Nawab. He had played from his youth and had an excellent eye, hitting with great accuracy. There would be as many as seven or eight a-side, all riding furiously, yelling with excitement, and throwing themselves almost out of their saddles to reach the ball. There were no rules and no particular boundaries except a low straggling wall. So the game was very free and easy, and to add to the excitement a band played the whole time, the drums working themselves up to a crescendo as anyone made a run down the ground and approached the opposite goal. The onlooking crowd would also join in the uproar. There would be a shout of triumph when a goal was hit. And at the end of the game the losing side were good naturedly derided, and had to dance before the victors.

Lee enjoyed playing polo with the Chitasis, and in this informal way got to know them and came to like them. There was little "team-work" displayed in their game. The play was eminently individualistic: each man played for himself. On the other hand, each man played with the whole of himself; he let himself go entirely. And a deal of character came out in consequence. In sitting with the Nawab

while the dancing was going on there were good opportunities, too, of discussing the different players and learning what the Nawab and his entourage thought of each. And in these ways Lee learned much about the leading men—for the polo players were mostly men of position. And when everyone had been loosened by the game and was in an easy and friendly mood all kinds of topics were broached, and Lee had opportunities of seeing what was going on in their minds and hearing what they thought of things.

The people got to know Lee, too. They saw him there in among them, enjoying what they enjoyed, interested in what interested them, and it made them easier in regard to him. They got accustomed to him—accustomed to the sight of him and to hearing his voice and listening to his talks with the Nawab. He became less of a stranger and more as one of themselves. Evidently he was not there to annoy them. Clearly he meant to be friendly. A better feeling sprang up between them and him. And Lee himself became still more convinced that the Chitasis, impulsive as they were, and deceitful and cruel in their bad moments, were at bottom a hearty, cheery people with lots of good stuff in them.

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CHAPTER XXII

THE MOUNTAINS

AS things settled down and Lee's position became established he felt he could get away now and then for a "week-end" in the mountains. And after years in the plains of India the mountains were to him a heaven. Generally he and I used to take it in turns to go for a Saturday to Monday, as it was wiser for one of us to be in Chitas. And I think Lee liked being by himself in the mountains; for there is something between ourselves and Nature which is disturbed by the presence of a single other person, however much we may like him. When anyone else is present we do not go out to Nature, and Nature does not come into us as we and she commune with each other when we are alone together.

But the first time he and I went together; and that trip I well remember. In the valley bottom it was insufferably hot, and we had determined to spend a day or two up in the mountains. So we sent on a small camp, and when the sun was well declining rode out two or three miles to the entrance of a gorge. Here we had to dismount and walk the rest of the way. The heat was suffocating in the narrow gorge; we drank far more than was good for us of the icy water flowing from a glacier higher up; and as we left the bed of the stream and panted up the parched mountain side we almost regretted leaving our quarters in the valley. But both from our reaching a higher altitude and also from the sun

having set behind the mountain ridges we slowly became cooler ; and eventually we reached our cosy little camp, a Kabul tent for each of us—about seven feet broad, seven feet long, and seven feet high in the middle and with a bathroom at the back. After a bath and a change into warmer clothes we sat down to dinner at our camp table out in the open with a clean white tablecloth over it, and we were soon eating one of those wonderful dinners which Indian servants infallibly produce under every circumstance whatever. Not that on this occasion there was any particular reason why a good dinner should not be produced, for we were close to the comparative civilisation of Chitas. Anyhow, there it was : a good restorative soup, chicken, and what approximates to bread sauce—and I say approximates, for nowhere out of England, in any country whatever, is true bread sauce ever made—then mutton cutlets, and, for pudding, canned Californian peaches ; and for drink a whiskey and soda—the soda water being made from sparklets and the icy water of a glacier stream. A king could not want more. And when it was over we sank into our comfortable camp arm-chairs and looked out on the world and found it good.

The air was now fresh and invigorating. We were at no great height, but we were well up on the mountain side, and able to look over the lesser spurs and across the valley on to a stupendous range on the other side, dominating which rose Sanchi-tu, over 25,000 feet in height. And I have never, anywhere, received such an impression of colossal might and magnitude as that range of granite mountains gave. But, as the sun set, clouds began to collect upon them—black angry clouds, just suited to match themselves against the mountains—and imperceptibly enveloped their prey till only the highest peak was visible, looking purer and calmer than ever as it rose serene above

the inky turmoil at its base. Suddenly swift shafts of lightning shot through the blackness and sounds of distant thunder began to boom across the valley. And now the advance-guard of the coming storm struck our side too. Threatening clouds billowed up the mountain side. The darkness deepened; the thunder grew louder; the lightning more vivid. An oppressive stillness had so far filled the air; but now came crash after crash as if the very mountains had been riven asunder. The lightning flickered and flashed in blinding fierceness. A terrific tempest burst upon our camp. The rain lashed down fit to cut our tents in shreds. The wind tore along the mountain as if it would carry whole rocks before it. We hung on hard to the tent poles till the fiercest fury was over. Then gradually the storm subsided, the lightning grew fainter, and the thunder vanished to distant grumblings. By morning the sky was clearer and fresher than ever, and the mountains stood out unperturbed by the night's terrific onslaught. The storm was over; but it had been a reminder of the fury and awfulness of Nature—and perhaps a warning that on the frontier all is not prettiness and sweets.

Early that morning I went off with my *shikari* after markhor. I used to wonder at Lee's lack of keenness for shooting, and he used to say he envied me my enthusiasm and admired my skill and the way in which I would run risks on the mountain side and suffer hardships to get a good head; but he said he had not got it in him. He used to say this in a guilty kind of way, as if it were something to be ashamed of, for he had such an intense admiration of manliness in every form he did not like to be behind-hand in any single one. Still, if he had not got the instinct there was no use in pretending he had, he argued. So he used to go off, mooning, as he expressed it, on the mountain side. And on this morning

while I went after my markhor he went wandering away by himself.

Generally I have very bad luck: the biggest markhor seem always to be in some other nullah. But on this occasion I was fortunate and secured what was about the record. I returned to camp dead beat, but very proud of myself, and I still have that head in my hall reminding me of many stirring days among the mountains. But Lee came back in the evening well pleased with himself too. I thought at the time that he would have been still more satisfied if he had shot a markhor. But he had been stalking markhor too, and he pretended that he had just as much of the excitement as I had, but while I had to put a clumsy rifle to my shoulder and devote my whole mind to aiming he had only to put his field glass to his eyes and could concentrate his mind on observing the animal and making a picture of it in his mind. He had time also to look around and see the animal in all its bearings, note its habits, and fill in the details of the general picture. He got not a snap-shot photograph, but an Academy painting.

Much discussion had we on these two points of view—both now and at other times. And I could see that what Lee really liked was to go off with his *shikari*, Kurban, well before dawn and spend his whole day upon the mountain. He himself would carry a good pair of field glasses and a botanical microscope. And Kurban would take sufficient food and a water bottle, to be replenished at the mountain streams, so that water would be available on the ridges where it would be often extremely hot when exposed to the midday sun. Kurban knew Lee's ways well and would conform to them. If he knew of markhor or ibex in the neighbourhood he would lead Lee to them and Lee would stalk them as any sportsman would, and would delight in matching his skill against the animal's wariness. The object

aimed at was to get as close as possible to the animals without being detected, so that they might be observed at leisure, for Lee loved watching these mountain goats at close quarters and marking their alertness and aliveness, their beauty of form, their great horns and shaggy beards, their proud mien, the springiness of their attitude, the grace of their movements when alarmed, and their nerve and sureness of themselves in making their way along the most awful precipices. After some long detour, involving hours of climbing down one side of a ravine and up another and then along the face of some nasty precipice so that he might arrive at a point where the air was flowing from the animals towards him instead of from him towards them—when he had arrived at a point where he was sure his scent would not be carried to them, and all he had to do was to keep hidden from them and as quiet as a mouse, he would lie behind a rock and with his field glasses watch them closely. Perfectly still he would lie like that till he felt himself imbibing 'the animals' quickness and grace. He would feel just as he did at school when he would minutely eye the Captain of the Eleven or some great athlete and want to be like him. He would drink in the fitness and alacrity of these mountain goats and remember that he himself had to be just as fit and alive as they, for at any moment he might be attacked from any quarter and be called on to exert himself to the limit.

Watching these wild animals and admiring their beauty and fineness of quality was one of Lee's special enjoyments. But what he enjoyed quite as much was to watch the mountains in their best moments—to get up by dawn on to some ridge from which he could have a view of the great peaks and see the sun rise on them. He would tell Kurban to wake him early, and he would invariably have a good substantial meal before he started, for he liked

a solid foundation for a hard day's work; and he would then ride as far as it was possible for a pony to go. But when he had to take to the ridge he and his faithful Kurban would start off on foot. By now the first faint signs of dawn would be appearing; the steel blue sky would be absolutely clear; the stars would be shining with their purest radiance; and scarcely a sound would be heard except the distant rumble of some torrent or the twitter of some early bird. The struggle upward would be hard, for the ascent would often be of from 3000 to 4000 feet. But Lee at this time was almost as hardy and wiry as the mountain animals he so much admired: a climb of 3000 or 4000 feet troubled him little; and by the time the grey of the mountains had turned to its daylight hue of brown he was on the summit of the ridge gulping with excitement to see the view.

And never was he disappointed. Rather would he feel increased elation each time he saw these mountains. And he seemed to be gradually winning them for his own. He had not obtained his view of them by looking at them from the garden of an hotel: he had worked to win it. This made all the difference. And each time he came to look at them he would discover some fresh beauty. Their full sublimity they only revealed to him bit by bit. And he had to discover it in all its fulness for himself. Not that in all its fulness could that sublimity ever reveal itself or could he ever discover it: always more and more was there to find. So he never tired of going to see them—to see them at dawn, to see them in the slanting morning and afternoon sun, and to see them at sunset.

Arrived at the summit of the ridge he would see across the valley the mighty mountains of the main range, just flushed by the rising sun. And it was not alone the height that impressed him, lifting his very soul right out of himself: it was also their

solidity and strength. In addition to being in their snowy summits so pure and spotless and refined, and so perfectly fitted to mingle with the azure of the sky, they were massive and enduring and rooted solidly and immovably on earth. He would sit on a rock on the ridge and open his soul to their subtlest impressions, passively receiving all they had to give. And he would like also to draw himself together again, concentrate himself, and then deliberately set himself to note each special element which went to make up the beauty of the whole, focusing his attention now on the incomparable grandeur of that 22,000 feet of mountain rising majestically from the valley bottom in height upon height ; now on the width of his vision ; now on the purple, the pink, the primrose, and the blue ; and now on the white of the highest peaks which was yet tinged with the delicatest trace of each one of these colours. The sheer magnitude of the mountains would impress him with a sense of the greatness of God. They were great in the physical sense only : still they did arouse in him a sense of spiritual greatness as well. They were a symbol of the sublimity and majesty of God. And their mystery had a fascination for him, too. In the distance they had a hazy look which had a peculiarly luring effect upon him, and made him long to penetrate their secrets. And even their awfulness—the dangers they threatened and the endurances they demanded—did not deter him : it only drew him on. The mountains were terrible and overpowering in their might, but they had joys, too, to give to those who would wrestle bravely with them. And the nearer he drew to them the more nigh he was to God : this was the feeling he had. They stood to him for God. They were His holy habitation. They were the outward manifestation of one aspect of God's nature.

And in the penetrating stillness of these mountain

sides, far from the noise and stir of life, he felt the near presence of God. He would give out his whole being to God, and then stand on the still mountain side, open and receptive, in humble reverence awaiting God's inrush on his soul.

Then having contemplated the mountain with intense concentration for some time he would swiftly change his mood, call up Kurban and look about for a comfortable place where he could have his breakfast and rest and read.

For it was at times like this that he found himself most keen upon getting in touch with other kindred spirits and fortifying himself from them. As he watched Kurban and realised how little he saw of the beauty which was so profoundly affecting himself he thought how he might be just as Kurban in comparison with what a Turner or a Shelley might see and feel. Kurban used to look at the mountains and see nothing particular about them. He was a good faithful fellow, but he had not the soul to see their beauty. And when Lee read Wordsworth or Byron or Shelley he would think to himself that, in comparison with what they would see, what he saw was only on the Kurban scale: his soul was not nearly sensitive enough. So he set himself to quicken it.

He would have the impression of the scene upon his soul, and he would chew it as oxen chew the cud. He would ruminate on it, turn it over in his mind till he had absorbed it into his being. And then he would turn quickly to something else, wandering about the mountain side looking at the flowers or watching birds with his field glasses, picking a flower—some gentian, iris, or primula—holding it before him, examining it from every side, not with a view to collecting or classifying it, but to marking its beauty or delicacy or refinement of form or of colour and impressing it on his mind so that always he could recall it; watching some bird, getting to know *it*

too, noting the vivid movement, the grace of its flight, or the glory of its colouring; observing the butterflies also—the swallow-tails or fritillaries, apolloes or clouded yellows—and revelling in the gorgeous contrast of their colours.

The mountain sides held beauty in inexhaustible variety, and Lee would thirstingly drink of as much as he could absorb for the time, and would then hurry back to camp to get through necessary business. And thus were his week-ends passed: it was his way of going to church on the frontier, he said.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE CLIMAX OF LIFE

TO keep in touch with the people Lee had established the custom of holding his room open to all who liked to come. He kept no privacy : there were no closed doors ; anyone who cared could walk straight in. If he were busy and the visitor of no great importance he would ask him to sit down on the carpet while he went on with his work till he had leisure to talk : in the meanwhile the visitors could talk among themselves. If the visitor were a man of position he would welcome him and talk, perhaps give him a chair, though chairs were almost unknown in Chitas, and this honour was reserved for only the highest ; or anyhow give him some tea or sweets or fruit. Always there was someone or other in Lee's room and generally several, and they seemed quite happy as long as they could sit there by the hour talking away themselves and watching him. How he stood it was astonishing to me ; but he laughed and said it was what he was paid for, and that it made the people feel that he was accessible. He added much to his knowledge of them and their country and their way of looking at things and at one another. It was one of his ways of feeling the pulse of the people and of knowing what was going on around him.

Into the midst of this assembly in his room there one day burst a perfect hurricane of fresh air from

England. In the middle of June there arrived a mail, and in it a letter from Truman which I had better quote in full. It is this :

“ I am writing to you by special behest of Lady Meara. And her commands have to be obeyed—and instantly. You are evidently a very particular hero of hers, and she has been talking to me about the voyage out to India when you met. She asks me to tell you that she has not forgotten, and never will forget, the talks you had together, and that she is expecting great things of you.

“ You are fortunate to have her esteem. For she is a wonder—a real saint upon earth. She has asked me down here—her country place—for a few days, and I have never seen anyone with such a real genius for society as she has. We are a largish party, but she keeps us all going in the most astonishing way. Each of us has to play up. She sees to that in the most peremptory but most gracious way. But we all *like* to play up. She takes such pains herself, we all want to make her party a success. It would be banal and boorish not to. I am no good at shooting or hunting ; but I strum away on the piano in the evenings, and that seems to please them. What I enjoy most though are my talks with her alone. While the others were out shooting she took me for a walk on her favourite downs. And afterwards she asked me into her little sanctum, where she has her piano and her books and can be by herself, and then it was she talked of you and all she expected of you, and told me to tell you about her.

“ She has prayers every morning at nine in the private chapel. They last a quarter of an hour ; and the household, and any guests who like can attend. And most guests do like ; for to hear Lady Meara play the organ, and sing, and read the prayers and a short lesson is a joy which attracts the most hardened

old sinner among us. She has, as you know, a divine voice ; but you never know *how* divine it is until you have heard it in that lovely little chapel. There she puts her whole glorious soul into the reading and singing and praying. Each word is given its fullest value ; and you simply cannot help being carried up to heaven. We all come out feeling we are angels.

“ She also plays the organ there by herself ; and once or twice she has asked me to hear her. She is not, of course, a *great* musician ; but I know no amateur who is better. And she manages to get a divine quality into sacred music which the greatest organist might be thankful to produce. She also gets deeper into the soul of a composer than the composer himself ever got. And what was in his soul she gets into yours—with some of her own added to it. I am most thankful I have come to know her like this. She gives me fresh inspiration. And it is to you I owe it.

“ But besides this, she is devoted to dancing : she loves the music and the rhythm and the movement and the lights and the gaiety. It seems to satisfy one other facet of her soul. We have very short dinners, and after dinner we are turned on to dance. I wrangle fiercely with her about this, and, to annoy her, I say that a room full of separate couples, each pair dancing on its own is dull to look at—just a maze without any coherence. What would be much better, I tell her, is something like a reel or the lancers, when eight or a dozen or sixteen or the whole lot could join together and make up the dance between them. That would be something worth looking at. Instead of these selfish pairs gyrating round by themselves and then going off by themselves to hidden corners, you would have each one making his contribution to the gaiety of the whole. He would be kept up to the scratch because everyone would

be watching him. And if all, dancing well together and putting their backs into it, brought off something worth dancing for they would be pleased with themselves and the spectators would clap. There would be jolliness about the whole thing. Dances would not be so sepulchral as they now are. I tell Lady Meara that if she can bring in some new kind of round dance she will live in history : she will go down to posterity among the great benefactors of our race. Talk of ‘ supplying a long-felt want,’ the whole country is shouting for a jolly English dance ! I shall chuck philosophy and write the music for it—something clean and sweet like an English hedge rose—if she will produce the dance—so I tell her.

“ And I tell her this as a sop, because she pretends to be very angry with me for not going in for music. She says I am throwing myself away on philosophy. I tell her she must not condemn me unheard. And I have given her a copy of my book which is out at last. I call it *The True Reality*. And I am sending you a copy too.

“ Do write and tell me how you are getting on in your outlandish parts, and how all we talked about when you were at Oxford is progressing. Lady Meara most particularly asked me for news of you. So mind you write or I shall be in dire disgrace with her. Tell me too what you think of my book. Philosophers, as a rule, write about each other and for each other : they write books about books. But I have tried hard to make this a book about life ; and I particularly want it to be a help to men like you.

“ And now, like the lady with her p.s., I come to the real point of my letter, and that is to tell you that I have decided to give myself *chiefly* to religion—to make religion, not philosophy, my main interest now. Religion is the one thing England most needs to-day. We English are still gross and coarse and vulgar, still lacking in refinement. And refinement—

any genuine, deep-down, thoroughbred refinement—can only come through religion. Art and literature polish the surface. Religion gets at the inmost spirit.

“But according to my ideas of religion there will be real downright fear of God. Not terror of Him, but that awe which begets reverence. And if men have reverence in them they soon acquire courtesy and grace. Yet with the awe will also go joy and exultation. All genuine religion is joyous. And where I shall come in is with my music. I want to express both the awe and the joy. I want our religion to be English—reverential, but sweet and glad. And once we have both reverence and gladness in our hearts we shall draw all men to us.

“I shall work with the Church of England. I like the name. It is our own Church. And every country ought to have its own Church. And the more national each is the more universal will it be. And in England the religion must be Christian. It could not be anything else. But I hope it will be more essentially Christian than it ever yet has been—that we will do what Christ did : go straight to the spirit of things. Then the Christianity by being deepened will be widened. This is my idea.”

A thrill went through Lee as he read this letter. What he had hoped for had at last happened. He was overjoyed at Truman's decision. And Lady Meara's message stirred in him the sweetest satisfaction. He was remembered, as he was sure he would be. From her message she was, he knew, the same to him as when they parted. In spirit they were still united ; and she in her way, as he in his, was carrying out the resolution they had formed. A holy satisfaction filled him ; and his soul went up in warm thanksgiving. This was life, indeed. And life at its very highest.

Then he turned to Truman's book. He threw aside all work, settled himself in a comfortable chair and plunged deep into it. It was a glorious book: he was fascinated by it. The pages carried him irresistibly along. It was a work on philosophy, but it was pure literature as well. It was a joy to read the glowing phrases. And Truman with the art of a poet could express his meaning in a picture. Lee could see at once what he meant. And he could see at once because it was evident that Truman himself saw clearly what he was meaning to express. And this in brief was that the most truly real is the highest. The most excellent is the most real and the most effective. The higher is not a mere product of the lower: it is the determining factor—the operating power—all along. In the old phraseology, God governs the world. Good does not appear by a kind of chance: the very nature of things is such that what is of value or worth must inevitably prevail in the end. Excellence is bound to be. Good in the long run must overcome evil and transform it, as noise is made into music.

There was nothing actually new in this. It was not quite as old as the hills; but it was old as man. What was new was the potency of the argument by which it was established, and the convincing and enchanting way in which it was put. Lee was more than ever envious of Truman. What was all he could do in comparison with this book? It would go forth to high and low. It would be welcomed by the cleverest. It would appeal to the plainest. It would move the soul of England. It would move the soul of many another country besides.

Lee came to me the next day and said:

"I must chuck all work and go to the mountains. I must be with them alone for a couple of days. You must carry on, like a good chap, and you shall have a holiday later. I've heard from that

philosopher friend of mine, Truman, whom I used to tell you about on board ship. He has sent me his book, which he has been working at for years; and I want to get away from all interruptions to read and inwardly digest it."

Off Lee went, therefore. And those two days alone in the mountains must have been the climax of his life. Truman's book and the thought of Lady Meara had evidently stirred something deep within which was waiting to be aroused, and the result was an almost unbelievable experience.

He describes himself as having awoken in the night and suddenly been permeated with an overpowering Spirit which seemed to force its way through every fibre of him and strain every nerve and tissue to its very limit. As he felt this coming on he fought hard against it, determined to keep his own will firm and his intellect clear. But the onrush was too great and he was overwhelmed, and suffused with it through and through. Yet when it was passed he was not left prostrate, but filled with a wonderful peace and with an overflowing joy and thankfulness. He thought that his nerves would be shattered after such an experience. On the contrary they were steadier than ever. He was remarkably composed and collected, very much indeed himself, and full of power. And he had an extraordinary sense of having been cleansed through and through. Above all, he was inspired with a tremendous impetus to *do*.

He returned to Chitas in the highest spirits—or rather in a state of exaltation. He seemed to be filled with a buoyant elation and his face appeared to be literally shining, as if he had a light burning within him. And he talked with a suppressed exhilaration, and also an ease and assurance, a rapidity and power—I might almost say authority—I had known nothing of before. And, from now on, I

noticed that he had a new power over the Chitasis. He did not force them into doing what he wanted : they did it of their own accord. He simply carried them along with him, and they could do no other. He entered into their life, and what he did he so delighted in doing they enjoyed doing it too. For nothing is so catching as joy.

At last he had found himself and he forthwith concentrated his exaltation and translated it into effective action. Now he really had caught the authentic spirit of the world ; and he would put it into everything he did. Whatsoever thing his hand found to do that he would do with all the might of this spirit. He would take pride in doing it to the best that was in him. He would do all to the glory of God.

And first he wrote to Truman, telling him how his book had inspired him and what a help it would be up there on the frontier ; and how right he had been to take the line he had instead of going in for music—even if he had written symphonies like Beethoven he would not do the good that this book would. It was a great and perfect book—a book which would clarify religion as well as vivify it : from now, religion would make a new start. And, as he was going to give himself up to religion, there was new hope for England.

Finally, he sent a message to Lady Meara. “ Tell her,” he said, “ that what you told me from her has been balm to my soul. Thank her for her message, and say that she is to me now, and always will be, just what she was on board ship. And tell her, too, that up in the mountains, as I lay in the open under the stars, I had just such an experience as that about which she told me, and that now I feel we are nearer than ever. And perhaps sometimes when she is playing on the organ in her little chapel in England she will think of her far-away friend in the heart of the Himalaya.”

CHAPTER XXIV

GETTING TO WORK

LEE had now to get down to business, and the day after his return we had a great talk about the future.

"We must get things moving," he said. "Truman has written a new book and we must make a new country. We must instil such a spirit into Chitas that it will grow by itself into an altogether better country. What you and I have to do is to make Chitas a model state for the whole Empire. Here we are, just in between two Empires, and the eyes of the biggest people are on us. Well, let us run Chitas so well that the Chief and people will be thankful we are here, and will not look to anyone else. I won't do this by bribery, by subsidising, and lavish presents. And I don't want to be dominating over them and overloading them with 'advice,' which is tantamount to a command. I want to do it by making them feel that through us they have security, and can get on with their lives without incessant broils and disturbances. And I want to do it by making them feel we are here at hand keenly interested in their welfare, ready to help them on in all they want to do to better their lot."

"I'm all with you there," I said; "I hate that subsidising: it goes against the grain with me and it demoralises the Chief. You're right, too, about not ramming advice down these peoples' throats: they only resent it."

" Well, what I feel about that," went on Lee, " is that every now and then, on some special occasion, I have as representative of Government to give advice, and the advice I then give really is more like an order than simple advice, which may be taken or not as the Chief thinks best. So I want to keep those occasions quite separate, and not spoil the effect by continually nagging at the Chief about what are really his own affairs."

" All the same," he continued, and now his eyes began to glow, " I do want to help these people along. I'm dead keen on it. I'm not going to be worrisome and interfering ; but I mean to hold them together in the first place and then make them take a pride in themselves, make the Chief proud of his people and the people proud of their Chief. They're a good lot at bottom—very like children, very naughty and passionate at times, but all right when they're occupied and interested, and I want to get them occupied and interested in making Chitas the pattern state upon this frontier. There will have to be plenty of discipline, for like children they require a firm hand, and there must be no spoiling them. But I want to get at their real life and make that better. They love their polo. Well, let us encourage them to have better polo. They love their bands : let us egg them on to have better bands. They love dancing and dramatic performances : let us stir them up to have better dancing and dramas, to look about for better performers, and try to come up to the best they see in other states. Then there is the delicate question of their religion, and saying their prayers regularly, like all good Moslems, and going to the mosque. Here we shall have to be circumspect ; but anyhow we can show we do attach importance to religion. We may be impartial in the matter, but we must not be callous. They're Moslems and they must be good Moslems, and we must show that we expect that

of them—expect them, indeed, to become better Moslems. And in all the amenities and courtesies and graces of life we must show interest. So many of these people copy our English brusqueness and uncouth manners. This is dreadful. They have beautiful manners themselves. Let us show them we admire this, and would not have them alter it on any account. There is just no end to the things we can do.”

“No,” I said, “and as far as I’m concerned, I’ll make my Sikhs as smart as paint so as to be a good example. These Sikhs are as vain as peacocks, and like nothing so much as being admired, and I’ll prime them up to be their best. Then, of course, there are those ways in which we have already done a good deal in other parts of this frontier, making roads and irrigation channels for their fields, and establishing a hospital dispensary.”

“Yes, I hadn’t forgotten those, and we must go ahead at them when we can get an engineer up here. We are always being reminded of that cynical French saying, ‘Surtout, pas trop de zèle,’ and as long as zeal is synonymous with fussy interference I agree with it. But at this moment I’m boiling over with zeal, and I’m going to show it, in spite of all the French cynics, and the dead hand of the Government Secretariat restraining me. I’m going to keep my zeal at white heat, add fuel to it, keep up a very furnace within me. But for all that I’m not going to let it boil over. I’m going to keep it in hand, and let it jet out just where and when I want it to.

“For we must make these people feel we’re not working for our own private advantage, but for theirs as well as ours. We’re not exploiting them for our own profit: we’re working for our combined good. We must identify our good with theirs. The more Chitas prospers the better it will be for us, we must make them see. No one must doubt that we have the good of Chitas at heart.”

That very afternoon he had an opportunity of making a start on his programme. There was the usual game of polo and, as customary, Lee and the Nawab played on the same side. The Nawab was in splendid form that afternoon. Having played the game from his boyhood upward he was wonderfully lithe and had a quick true eye. As he hit the ball down the ground the band redoubled its energy, everyone shouted with excitement, and when he hit a goal there was a wild yell of delight and the Nawab rode back to Lee's side as pleased as a boy.

It was after the game was over that Lee's opportunity came. While the beaten side was doing its penance by dancing, and everyone's attention was engaged in watching them, the Nawab turned quickly and earnestly to Lee and wholly unburdened his soul. The two were sitting together on chairs while the rest were seated on the ground. The Nawab spoke in low tones, and said he wished to say things he did not want the rest to hear, and it was better to say them on an occasion like this, for formal interviews attracted attention, and at them he always had to be accompanied by men he did not altogether trust.

“ I am in a fearfully difficult position,” said the Nawab. “ My next younger brother, Bahadur Khan, is plotting against me. He wants to get rid of me and be on the throne in my place ; and he attracts to him any noble who has a grievance against me and who has been offended by something I have done or said. And each noble, as you know, has his following who go with him wherever he goes. I am watched day and night. Every slip I make is taken advantage of and any grievance fomented. I hardly dare play polo for fear of being knocked on the head ; I have to watch everything I eat ; and I have to keep a body-guard about me for fear of being shot or stabbed in the back. Then there is my father's brother, Inayat

Khan, living in exile in Gulistan : he is always on the look-out to make a bid for the throne. He is popular with many of the nobles, and is continually sending men over here to sound the feeling. Besides all this there is the Nawab of Gulistan himself. He is more powerful than I am ; and he is very ambitious. He would like to conquer Chitas and add it to his dominions. So he fosters all this intrigue of my brother and uncle, and pretends to support them ; but really he means to use them as tools and seize the country himself. That is my position, and I am anxious about it."

"I do not doubt it," Lee replied, "but you are in a strong position all the same. You are the eldest son of the old Nawab, and you have the bulk of the nobles and the people with you naturally on that account, and you have the support of the British Government. We want to see you strong and secure, and if you and I work together we shall be able to defeat all your enemies. And my advice is this : Keep on the alert ; keep well informed of what is going on both inside your country and in Gulistan ; don't give your enemies a single opening ; and at the same time get your nobles and people interested and contented ; get their minds occupied and away from intrigues and conspiracies. I will think this matter over and we can have some formal deliberations. In the meanwhile, you may be certain, Nawab Sahib, that I shall stand by you and help you to make your country the finest on the frontier."

That was all Lee could say at the moment, but it was enough to hearten the Nawab ; and when we got home Lee and I discussed the position generally. It was more delicate and dangerous than Lee would allow to the Nawab. As a matter of dry fact the Nawab was not particularly popular. He was a good shot and a good polo player, but he was given to unnatural habits which the people did not like.

He had also been too free in getting rid of nobles he suspected, and such acts left resentment behind them, and smouldering animosities. Lastly, the fact that he was dependent on us told against him with a good many—the British were outsiders and not even Moslems. Why should the Nawab of Chitas be dependent on them? His father was not, why should he?

Then Lee's own position was not particularly secure. He represented the British Government, but the British Government was a long way off. As escort he had only fifty Sikhs. The nearest British troops was three hundred miles away, and hostile tribes lay in between Lee and them. He had to be careful not to obtrude himself too officiously, and make it too obvious before the people that their chief was dependent on him. And he had to be careful not to say or do anything that would arouse Moslem feeling. Both in Chitas and in Gulistan there were fanatical mullas eager enough to rouse the people against him if they dared; and a slip would cost him his life. It would cost a great deal more: it would cost the lives of many others besides. Lee had, therefore, just as much reason as the Nawab himself to be circumspect. Lee had to remember, too, that he was establishing a tradition. He must look to the future. His successor would benefit or suffer according as he now did well or ill. He and they would have to live their lives right in among these people. They would be in the midst of the hive, not looking at it from outside. So irritability must be assuaged, not aroused: he must leave the hive well disposed, not hostile towards his successor.

But it was no part of Lee's nature simply to sit still and take precautions: he meant to be active. His position was risky, but Lee loved risky positions: they spurred him to be at his best. He was never so light-hearted and never so capable as when he was

running risks. After that talk with the Nawab he was certain he had the Chief's confidence, and he meant to make the most of that. He must make the Chief feel that he was a rock upon which he could absolutely rely. And then, through the Chief he would win the confidence of the people and make them feel that from the British connection they had at least security and might have prosperity. And if he could get the goodwill of Chief and people then neither the Gulistanis, Afghans, Russians, nor anyone else would have a chance in this quarter. Lee meant to make of Chitas an example to show both Russians and Moslems that the British connection implied neither oppression nor burden. He meant both of them to see that as a result of British influence there was orderliness, material progress, and opportunity for the people to live their own lives in their own way.

"You and I will have to keep our eyes skinned," he said to me, "and except when we're away for a holiday in the mountains we must always be on parade. These people have only seen two or three Englishmen besides ourselves, and we must remember that they are taking stock of us minutely. Not a detail escapes them; and from what they see of us they form their impression of England. And a very good thing it is they are so observant and impressionable, for I mean to turn this trait to account. There's a lot I intend to impress on them. We have your fifty Sikhs: you must drill them up to the nines, and tell them I mean to exhibit them before the Nawab and his nobles, and show them what really well-drilled men are like. There need be no useless parade work—except that when they turn out for a guard of honour in their scarlet uniforms they must be as clean and smart as the guard at Buckingham Palace. But what I would like to show the Nawab is the rapidity with which they can be

brought into action from whichever quarter danger threatens and the accuracy with which they fire. Put your men on their mettle. Tell them what will be expected of them, and they will come up to the scratch all right.

"Then I want the Nawab to come and see your men in their quarters and see how well they are looked after, how well fed and clothed and equipped and paid they are. All this I know will impress the Nawab and the Chitasis. They'll see that the discipline is strong and the training severe, but that you look after the men's welfare—and what is more play games with them and do all you can to keep them interested and amused.

"And now you'll observe my deep cunning! All this has an ulterior object in view. I want the Nawab to say to himself, 'I wish I had a bodyguard as efficient as that: with a few hundred men like these Sikhs and with rifles like theirs I would be perfectly safe.'"

"I see your game now," I said. "And some day you hope he'll come to you and ask you to have some of his own men trained like ours?"

"Exactly. And if he doesn't ask I shall have to hint it myself. But I'm very anxious that the first move should come from him. He'll take more interest if it does.

"And there's one other subject I must speak about, Barkley. Do sternly warn your men not to have anything to do with the women of the country. At all costs we must keep out of trouble in that direction. Say you'll be adamant there."

"That'll be a bit difficult," I said, "for the men are lonely up here, and they think that's a kind of natural necessity."

"That's just what they said in the regiment, but we must do here what we did there," said Lee. "Get the Jamadar, or someone among them whom they

respect religiously, to give them a good talking to. Appeal to their better natures. Make them see that there's something degrading and unworthy and bestial in going about with women who are not their wives. But as we have these Sikhs here in these difficult conditions it is up to us to make it as easy as we can for them to keep straight in the matter of women. So we must do all we can to provide entertainment and interest for them when they're off duty, and so keep them out of mischief."

"You can help me a lot here," I said, "and I'll keep my eye well on them. They're all right when they're watched, but they want watching. I wish though that that Nawab was worth all this trouble that you and I shall have to be taking. It seems to me that he's thinking much more of saving his own skin than of anything else. He doesn't care twopence for his people."

"I don't suppose he does," said Lee, "but he's not worse in that respect than any other of the Chiefs on this frontier. They've a pretty venturesome time getting on to the throne, and have to fight their way through against brothers and cousins and uncles, and when they're there they have to keep as alert as markhors or some leopard usurper will spring upon them; and I suppose they've not much time or energy or inclination left to think about the 'good of the people.' But, now we are here to steady things, the Nawab ought to be able to look after the people a bit; and I want gradually to instil into him that his own skin doesn't matter a rap—that what really does matter is that he should exert himself to push his country along. He has plenty of brains and is very inquisitive and receptive and responsive; and I hope I shall eventually make him see that there's much more enjoyment to be got out of life—and incidentally his life'll be much safer—if he uses his talents and his position to keep people together and

help them to lead a decent life than there is if he is perpetually absorbed in his own selfish pleasures and in keeping his skin whole. As likely as not he—and you and I, too—may lose our skins, for we are all in a pretty risky position here. But we'll have a good fling first, anyhow. We might as well be men while we are at it. So I'm going to do my level best to keep the Nawab up to the mark, and even if we both get scuppered I shall have started the ball a-rolling. I shall have started a tradition and precedent and must trust to my successors to carry it on."

The ice once being broken the Nawab continued to be communicative about himself, his position, and his difficulties. A few days after he had had the very confidential talk at the polo, he made one of his customary visits to Lee, accompanied as usual by his minister and a few nobles and his and their retainers. After retailing the latest rumours about events in Gulistan he addressed his conversation more particularly to Lee.

"I have a miserable time as Chief," he said. "When I was a young man I was able to do exactly what I liked. My father was rather strict, but I could go shooting and hawking as much as I chose, and I had no responsibilities. I had a grand time. Now it is nothing else but responsibility. I am supposed to be able to do what I like, but when I took my women-folk out for a picnic the other day there was nothing but grumbling. The women liked it, but all the men said it was against the custom, and they scowled so much I shall not do it again. It is not worth the trouble."

This was too delicate a subject for Lee to venture an opinion upon, so he only murmured some platitude about the Nawab at any rate having the satisfaction of having done his best to make people enjoy themselves. The Nawab then continued his grievances.

"Another thing I wanted to do. These turbans

are very heavy and hot, and I wanted to get a light cool solar hat like yours. But as soon as I made the suggestion there were such cross looks I dare not get one. They said people would think I had become English, and there would be an outcry in the country. I cannot do a single thing I really want to."

"I am thankful anyhow, Nawab Sahib, that you didn't get a hat like mine. We admire you much more in your turbans. Our dress is all very well for ourselves, but we like to see Chitasis in Chitasi dress. It's very graceful and becoming, and you get more colour into it than we do into our dress. You have very good taste for colour, and colour is always refreshing. So do, I pray you, keep to your own handsome headdress."

"Yes, I'm going to. All the same, I should have liked to be able to wear a light cool hat."

It was hard luck, poor man, that he should not be able to wear even the head covering he liked, but Lee had purpose in his remarks. For some unknown reason, in Central Asia, the hat is regarded as the symbol of nationality. The peaked cap of the Russian is a sign that the wearer is a Russian. The turned-up hat with a feather sticking straight out behind is evidence that the wearer is a Chinaman or an official in Chinese employ. And the solar hat which Englishmen have to wear in India has, unfortunately, come to be regarded as witness that the wearer is British. Consequently there was a good deal more than convenience and comfort involved in the Nawab's wearing a solar hat, and Lee continued his remarks.

"I should have been sorry if you had taken to wearing a solar hat—except of course out shooting—for I think there's a good deal in the people's objection. They like to feel their Chief belongs to them and is a true Chitasi. They don't want him to be an

Englishman. And we don't want you to be an Englishman either. Nor do we want to be Chitasis ourselves. We believe in Englishmen being good Englishmen and Chitasis being good Chitasis.”

The King's birthday gave Lee another opportunity of producing the desired impression on the Nawab, and he set himself to make the utmost of it. With only fifty sepoy it was not possible to make much of a military display, but they would serve as a nucleus and he would invite the Nawab and numbers of his people to be present at a parade and subsequent feast. Before the day he asked me to drill the escort with the most perfect precision, and to have each man in his full dress uniform turned out spotlessly clean and neat. For Lee was a great believer in ceremonial on high occasions, and if there was to be ceremonial at all it must be perfect, he held.

On a raised grass-covered earth platform, under some beautiful plane trees, he had carpets laid and a seat covered with brocade set for the Nawab. Opposite this the sepoy were drawn up in line, and when the Nawab arrived a little before twelve they presented arms in salute. The Nawab and his brother, the nobles and Wazir were received for Lee by his native assistant, Sifat Khan, and took their seats on the platform while the retainers, perhaps five hundred in all, were grouped behind and on either side of it, and crowds of villagers assembled behind.

Punctually at twelve Lee, in full uniform, rode up to the flagstaff, from which flew the Union Jack, midway between the platform and the escort. First he wheeled his horse full face to the Nawab and saluted him and then he faced the escort. “ Present arms,” I shouted. The fifty rifles came to the “ present ” like a single machine. The bayonets glistened in the burning sunshine. The bugles sounded a “ flourish ” in place of the National Anthem. And Lee, very erect and smart on his little Arab, took the

salute, and the Nawab, and with him every man present, rose and salaamed. On that brilliant day, with the deep blue sky overheard, the snowy mountains rising in the background, the profuse greenery of the plane trees in rich clumps dotted over the valley, and the gorgeous colours of the Nawab's and his nobles' dresses, the setting was perfect for the little scene which Lee was to enact. And after the general salute had been given and the Nawab and his people had resumed their seats the sepoy marched past, first in slow time and afterwards in quick time, and then formed up in line opposite the flagstaff and fired a *feu de joie*. Then they advanced in line nearly up to the flagstaff, halted sharply, and again presented arms, and the whole together shouted : " Victory to the King Emperor."

Lee then, in a very soldierly direct way, and in a loud, clear, distinct voice, and without any hesitation, made a speech, of which the following is a translation, and which was translated sentence by sentence to the Nawab by Sifat Khan.

" To-day we celebrate the birthday of the King Emperor. In our distant homeland, as well as here, as well as in India, in Canada, in Australia, in Africa, and in a thousand islands over all the seas, his devoted subjects are assembling to do him honour. But in having to guard the furthest outpost of his Empire we are privileged above all the rest, and His Majesty expects of us to be faithful to his charge. You have voluntarily enlisted in his service. Of your own accord you became his soldiers. And being his soldiers he expects of you that you implicitly obey the commands his officers give you. While you are in his service you must submit yourselves to the strictest discipline, for it is only by means of discipline that military duties can be performed with punctuality and precision. But His Majesty also expects of us his officers that while we enforce discipline we should

no wit less care for your welfare. As we would look after our own children, so must we see that you are well fed, adequately equipped and suitably trained. And he requires us, too, to see that every man who by his devotion to duty and his soldierly efficiency has proved himself worthy of it shall receive his just reward.

"In our position here the call may come at any moment. On the frontier storms arise without a warning; and we have to meet them on the instant. For that a soldier must be prepared. But here we have one further duty. As servants of the Emperor we must bear ourselves to bring him honour. His good name is in our keeping. According as we comport ourselves will he himself be judged. If we are slovenly and slack and ill-behaved the people here will say our Emperor cannot be great or he would not keep such sluggards in his service. But if we show ourselves true soldiers, take pride in ourselves and scorn to do a mean, coarse deed, then all will say our Emperor is great. Thus is his name in our hands. It stands high at present. We must each in our measure do our best to raise it higher.

"I call upon you to give three cheers for His Majesty the Emperor."

In this way did Lee try to bring home to the Sikhs a sense of the Empire as a whole and a feeling for it.

They gave three cheers, and marched away to their quarters, while Lee dismounted, saluted the Nawab, and took a seat by him.

"I also wish to offer my congratulations to the Emperor," said the Nawab. "I have often heard what a great Ruler he is, and some day I should like to see him."

Lee never could resist an opportunity of enlarging upon the greatness of the Empire, and he proceeded to tell the Nawab of its extent and population. But

he never spoke of the Empire in a blatant manner. He was an Englishman and had a perfect right to be proud of England's position in the world. But he was no fool. He was quite conscious that there were other countries than England in the Universe. And he knew, too, that mere bragging only irritates. And all he wanted on the present occasion was to let the Nawab know of the greatness of the British Empire, and the feelings with which his subjects regarded the Emperor. And it was important to do this because, unless some one authoritatively tells them, these small frontier Chiefs cannot be expected to know such things for themselves.

But the Nawab was pretty shrewd, and after he had courteously acknowledged what Lee had said about the King and the British Empire he asked him about the Russian Empire and the Chinese Empire, both of which nearly touched his territory.

"I hear the Russian Emperor has a very great army," said the Nawab. "Is that true?"

"Yes," replied Lee, "he has a much bigger army than the King of England, but the Russian Empire has an enormously long land frontier, so the Czar has to keep an army strong enough to defend it against the Germans, the Austrians, the Turks, and the Chinese, whereas England is an island, and is defended by her navy."

"But ships cannot guard the Indian frontier," said the Nawab, "and the Russian army is close here: Russian soldiers have even crossed the pass into Chitas."

"That's true," replied Lee, "but India is guarded by mountains and deserts. Some Russians crossed the Chitas frontier, but they were very, very few. No big force could come by this way to India. It would have to cross hundreds of miles of mountain before it could reach India from Russian Turkestan. And there are neither supplies nor transport on the

way for a large force. All the same, we intend to prevent even a small force crossing here again. It is because we mean to be on the guard that I am here. We are keeping a watch on every movement of the Russians, and we trust you, Nawab Sahib, to help us in keeping them out of your country. It is, of course, for you to choose whether you will side with the Russians or with the British. We are not going to march an army into Chitas to compel you to join us. But it is more natural for you to throw in your lot with the British, for the water of your country flows to India. We have the means of making you strong, and we want you to be strong enough to be secure. And if you yourself want to be strong and secure you have only to say the word.

"However, I don't want to talk politics to-day. On the King's Birthday it's customary for His Majesty's representative to give a banquet in his honour, so that people may meet together and enjoy themselves, and I am grateful to you, Nawab Sahib, for having accepted my invitation. It is a great pleasure to have you here this afternoon. Sifat Khan, tell them to bring the dinner."

When the dishes had been set out before them, Lee said : "Now, Nawab Sahib, I want you to taste some of our delicacies from England. Try some of each and tell me which you like best, and I will get some more from England for you."

"Thank you, Sahib. How very kind."

"It is your custom, and a very sensible one, to begin dinner with the light food and go on to the heavy afterwards. So there are some peaches, there are some pears, and there are some apricots. They come in syrup in tins from California in America, where there is a beautiful climate and plenty of sunshine and plenty of land, and they can grow fruit cheaply and in any quantity. So here is this fruit brought right across America and across the Atlantic Ocean

to England, and then five thousand miles over the sea to India, and then up India and over the mountain, to Chitas."

"I suppose the Emperor has these for dinner every day."

"No, indeed, he doesn't. He eats English fruit grown in his own gardens. No fruit comes up to English fruit. The sun is not too hot in England, and there are dull and rainy days alternating with the sunny. And the Emperor's fruit is grown in a glass house where it is protected from the rain and cold, but gets all the sunshine. Now take another of these pears."

"But I have still to eat peaches and apricots, Sahib, and then the meat and all those different kinds of bread."

"Well, the Emperor's birthday comes only once a year, so you must eat plenty in his honour. Now try some of this sherbet. You Moslems do not drink wine; and it is a very wonderful thing that millions of people for hundreds of years have had the self-control to abstain from it. So in place of wine I have concocted a drink which is made from fruits and which fizzes up so that you must drink it quickly, and I have had it iced so that it is very cool and refreshing—just what we want this hot weather. Now watch me how I drink it and drink it sharp."

"Perfectly delicious, Sahib! Let me give some to the Wazir and the nobles. Now, Wazir Sahib, don't wait like that till all the bubbling is over. Drink it at once. Have some more and try again. And now, Bahadur Khan and the rest of you, do the same. This is what the King of England drinks."

After they had had plenty of tinned fruits, fancy cakes and biscuits, and sherbet, reinforced with Eno's fruit salt, big plates of *pillau* were brought, and they all set to on this rice and chicken and raisins. Following this came a magnificent "birthday" cake,

which our cook had somehow managed to produce, and with it plates of candied fruits, prunes, and sweets of various kinds, and ices to finish up the feast. At the same time a repast of a more humble description was given to about five hundred retainers.

There was great good cheer all round. Chitasis are a merry lot, subject to fits of gloom and despondency but ready to enjoy life too, and Lee exerted himself to make this a day of special enjoyment for them. And after the “ King’s Birthday Dinner ” was over he had the Sikhs out to give an exhibition of their skill in quoit throwing. The thin sharp discs were sent skimming through the air at the mark with marvellous precision, and the Chitasis shouted with approval. Then came wrestling matches. The two champion Sikhs strutted proudly about showing off their fine figures for the admiration of the multitude. Then they would slap their thighs and crouch and spring upright again to test their muscles. And when the signal for them to begin was made, they would circle round each other and make feints till an opening was found and then close and writhe and strain till one was thrown on his back. Then the victor would caper about and shout a pæan of triumph. All of which delighted the Chitasis ; and when the performances were over and the Nawab had profusely thanked Lee and had departed with his following, Lee said to me :

“ It was a horrible grind getting up this *tamasha*, but it was well worth while. And it’s a blessing to be away for an hour or two from the purely political part and to help people enjoy themselves. Besides, I’m certain that when people once get enjoying things together they very soon find a way of arranging any business between them. Business first and pleasure after is a sound motto only within limits. My motto would be, ‘ Take care of the enjoyment and the business will take care of itself.’ These Chitasis are

not at all bad. There's no reason why we shouldn't have a good time together, and the element of danger gives a touch of spice to it. A King's Birthday Dinner up here on the frontier is a more cheerful entertainment than a stuffy banquet in London."

CHAPTER XXV

WINNING CHITAS

AND the element of danger very soon made its appearance. Chitas is a land of swiftly changing prospects. Only a week after the King's Birthday entertainment a sudden cloud arose. Early in the morning a messenger arrived from the Nawab, saying that in the night news had come from the Gulistan frontier that forces were assembling, and it was believed that an attack on Chitas would be made. The Nawab had, therefore, sent out messengers express to every village for a quota to be despatched immediately to the frontier. Already men from the nearest villages were arriving and were being forwarded to the frontier. Lee at once went to see the Nawab. He said he would have informed Lee immediately but did not like to disturb him in the night.

"I know I ought to consult you before taking these measures. But the matter is very urgent, and I am not thinking of attack. I am only preparing for defence."

"Government certainly do wish me to be consulted before forces are assembled on the frontier; and the reason is this: They may have to exert their influence with the Nawab of Gulistan, and they must be quite sure beforehand that nothing provocative has occurred. In the present case I consider you were quite justified in immediately summoning your force, but I would be glad if you would keep me

regularly informed of what happens, and if I can help you let me know."

"Certainly, Sahib. I daresay we shall not be attacked. The Nawab of Gulistan is very warlike and ambitious, and he may be gathering his men together to attack someone else and not me; but I have to be on my guard. And what makes me fear that the gathering may be destined for Chitas is that the mulla has been fulminating against me for having Englishmen in my country. He is a red-hot fanatic. He has rheumatism badly, and is pining to come to the hot springs, but will not do so as long as you are here; and he had the impudence to ask me to get you out of the way for a few days while he passed through. This is the man who is now stirring up the Nawab of Gulistan; and he may succeed. We may suddenly have the Gulistanis upon us."

"We may; and we must be prepared," replied Lee; "but the Nawab of Gulistan is shrewder than this fanatical mulla. Mullas have no responsibility. They set people on fire against the Christians, but they suffer none of the consequences which may result. The Nawab of Gulistan is in a very different position. An error may cost him his throne. He knows very well that you're a friend of the British. My presence here is testimony to that. And if he wantonly attacked you he knows that he would offend the British Government. He's hidden away in the mountains and not easy to get at, so he may mind very little whether he offends the British Government or not. Still he won't do it without sufficient prospect of gain: he'll not do it just to please the mulla; and if he can satisfy his ambitions by attacking some chief who is weaker than you are he will use his forces in that direction. That's my view of the situation. But I'm new here and may be wrong, so remember I want every item of news that comes in; and please prevent your men doing

a single thing that would arouse resentment. There's a lot of powder around, and we must be careful about lighted matches.”

The Nawab was considerably calmed by the interview, and he asked Lee to have a look at some of the men who were coming in. They were just the ordinary villagers, caught up from their fields, and armed with matchlocks and swords, and carrying a few days' food. There was nothing soldierly about them, they did not look unduly warlike, and there was practically no organisation. They followed some village leader, and he put himself under a Governor appointed by the Nawab. That was all the organisation there was. But they were hardy men. They had started off from their homes at an hour's notice, and they would do their twenty or thirty miles a day. And these were great advantages.

“ They're a sturdy lot,” said Lee to the Nawab, “ but I wish they were properly trained and better armed. The Nawab of Gulistan has a good number of rifles, and he takes a lot of trouble in training his men. He's a regular Pathan. Pathans think of nothing but war and rifles.”

“ Yes. I see now that my men ought to be readier for fighting. These Pathans never leave us alone. We are always under threat of attack. And I must get my men trained. Will you help me, Sahib? You said you would if I asked you. And here you really could help me.”

“ Very well, Nawab Sahib. We can't do much until this present matter is settled, but when we've got through this I'll work out what can be done.”

Rumours continued to pour in that an attack from Gulistan was intended. But no actual movement of the Gulistani gathering was reported; and possibly because of Chitast preparedness no movement took place. The excitement gradually died down and the men returned to their homes.

But the scare had served as a warning, and both Lee and the Nawab saw that some permanent arrangement must be made. The Nawab said he would like a few of his leading men to come and see the Sikhs drill, so that they might understand what would be required; and he suggested that they should be shown some quite simple firing exercises and movements for attack and defence.

Accordingly, Lee had the Sikhs out—not in full dress parade uniform, but in service khaki. Marks were then shown on the hillside, at which they fired both individually and by volleys. The individual firing fairly impressed them. But the Chitasis shouted with excitement at the volleys—when they saw fifty bullets fired as one and all hitting near about the mark at exactly the same time. That, they said, would certainly bring them victory: it would terrify the enemy and make them feel that nothing could stand against it.

Attacks were then made on a rock by a series of rushes—first firing rapidly and then rushing forward to some sheltering wall or rock, then rushing forward again and finally fixing bayonets and charging the enemy's position with wild yells of "Victory." The precision and dash with which this attack was made and the fierce aspect of the Sikhs deepened the impression which the volley-firing had made.

"I should like my men to be like that," said the Nawab, "only do not drill them too hard, for they will not be able to stand it. They are not accustomed to much discipline and being ordered about."

"I will not try them too high at first," replied Lee, "but they will very soon get to like it. Men enjoy being made to do well what they have to do at all. And you will soon see them as proud of themselves as these Sikhs are, and trying to be as good or better. And they will see the necessity of discipline. They will quickly realise that fifty men working together

under one commander, and each doing instantly and precisely what the commander orders are very much more effective than fifty separate men each acting as he chooses. If those fifty Sikhs had been allowed to do exactly what each one separately liked to do, their attack would have been weak and straggling and the enemy would have laughed at them. It is by disciplining them to work together that we shall get good results; and they will discover that for themselves before we have had them very long. And one thing, Nawab Sahib, you may be sure I will impress upon them from the very first—that they will remain *your* soldiers and not Government's.”

“Thank you, Sahib, that will make things much easier for me with my people. Many of the nobles keep telling me that you will just turn my Chitasis into sepoy and take them away from me; and that made me hesitate for some time about coming to you. But if you will let everyone see that you are only *training* the levies for me and are not making them into soldiers of the Government my people will be much happier.”

All was thus going well when suddenly a bomb-shell fell upon Lee. He received a letter of severe censure from Mr. Donald. He was told that in not stopping the levies being assembled on the frontier he was allowing the Nawab to get out of hand, and was being hoodwinked by him. He must bring the Chief up with a round turn and control him with a much firmer hand in future. Lee was furiously indignant, and it took all his sense of obedience to authority to keep him in hand. And his indignation reached almost boiling-over point when the Nawab came hastily to visit him, evidently much hurt, and said to him:

“If you had anything to reproach me with why did you not say it to my face, Sahib, instead of complaining behind my back to Mr. Donald. I have

received a letter of severe rebuke from him, and I had no idea I had done anything to displease you. I have always trusted you and you might have trusted me, and told me if I had done anything you did not approve. Now I am in disgrace with Mr. Donald.”

Lee was in a very awkward position. It went against the grain with him to give away his own superior officer. Above everything, British officers must pull together: they must always show a united front. At the same time he could not have the Nawab losing trust in him and thinking he would say one thing to his face and another behind his back. So he replied to the Nawab:

“I can assure you, Nawab Sahib, that I have not said a word to Mr. Donald that I have not said to you. I have nothing to complain of about you, and I have not complained. What has happened is probably this. My report about the scare on the frontier was not clearly written and Mr. Donald has misunderstood it. Chitas was not attacked. Nothing happened. And Mr. Donald may have thought we were unnecessarily alarmed, and that there was no need to summon your levies, and that I should have prevented you. But I thought at the time you were right and told Mr. Donald so. You may be quite sure, Nawab Sahib, that I will always be frank with you.”

The Nawab seemed appeased with this explanation. But Lee's indignation was by no means spent. The serious thing was that Mr. Donald had, in addition to everything else, reported the whole matter to Government. The Nawab had been held up to Government as disregarding Lee, and Lee had been held up as loose and negligent in his control. Lee's reputation was at stake. And a man in the early stages of his career has to be exceedingly jealous about his reputation or his whole future may be

irretrievably damaged. He, therefore, wrote a full explanation of the situation, and demanded respectfully but very firmly that this explanation also should go before Government.

This affair upset Lee badly. He never after had any confidence in his superior officer, and his difficulties were thereby doubly increased. Looking on as an outsider I could see that the two men had utterly incompatible temperaments. The one based his life on mistrust of his fellow-men, the other trusted them. However, Lee was well aware that in official life—as everywhere else—there are hard rubs which have to be lived down as best one can. His buoyant spirit kept him going. And one good effect the breeze had was to bring the Nawab closer to Lee. He got into his head that he must keep in almost daily touch with Lee, so that there might be no further misunderstanding between them.

And this suited Lee well. For he wanted to be an influence in Chitas in a much larger field than only politics. He wanted to enter into the whole life of the people, and be able to see and speak as a Chitasi. Both to him and the Nawab it was a relief to get away from official political relations. So besides playing polo together two or three times a week and there clearing away a lot of petty irritations, Lee would interest himself in the music, in the story-telling, in the dramatic performances, and in the local architecture of the Chitasis.

A new mosque was to be built, and the Nawab talked over the plans with him. In these discussions everyone had his say. The Nawab himself was by no means a strict observer of his religion. He was very lax, in fact. But he was pushed on by those around him to build a mosque, and he was a man of sufficient taste to want it to be beautiful. Moslems will have no figures on their mosques, and the design is always extremely simple. It is a place where the people

may assemble for the common worship of God. That and nothing else. It may be simple, but it must be beautiful. It must express their adoration. It must be full of grace and dignity.

All this came out as the Nawab and the Wazir, the mulla and the nobles discussed it together. The Wazir was the moving spirit.

"We have no proper mosque," he said ; "the old one is tumbling down. And the mullas from outside, when they pass through Chitas, make disparaging remarks about it. The Nawab Sahib thinks we ought to have a new one."

"Certainly," said the Nawab, "I am not going to have these worrisome mullas from Gulistan running down Chitas. They are always abusing something or other. What do you say about it, Mulla Sahib."

"We worship God in our hearts," said the Mulla, "and no mosque is needed for a man who truly worships God. But when we join together for our worship in a building that building should be the best we can make. It should be worthy of God. It should not be a shabby old building. I think the Wazir is right. A new mosque should be built. And it should be as beautiful as we can make it."

"Very well. A mosque shall be built," said the Nawab. "Get together two or three of the best builders and let us discuss plans with them. What do you think about it, Sahib ?"

"It is not my business," said Lee, "but I do agree with the Mulla Sahib. A building to be used for the worship of God should be as perfect as it can be made. I have seen most beautiful mosques in India, and I will get you photographs of some. And if you would like I will get up some good Indian builder ; but your men here are very clever, and if they see that you are in earnest in wanting to have a beautiful mosque built they will work their best and produce what you desire."

A week or two later three men were brought and the whole question of the site and plan and decoration was gone into, everyone having his say. Each would tell of mosques he had seen and dwell on the good points in them. These would be compared. And eventually by the coming together of all these views a common opinion was formed and a definite decision was given by the Nawab—principally influenced by the Wazir—and the work was placed in the hand of the selected master-builder. And it is because the work is planned and executed in this way that buildings for public purposes—forts or palaces or mosques—in such countries as Chitas do express the character of the people.

Lee himself did not take much part in the discussions. But I could see he enjoyed listening to them. And I could see, too, that the Nawab and his people were pleased at the interest he took. And whenever his opinion was asked he would give it very decisively.

“That is my opinion, as you ask it,” he would say, “but you yourselves are really the best judges. All I would urge is that you make it worthy of its object and something you can be proud of.”

During these operations the exchange of visits between the Nawab and Lee continued as frequent as ever. Scarcely a day passed without this meeting either in the fort, or in Lee’s house, or at polo—though Sundays Lee insisted upon keeping to himself, and then he used either to absorb himself in books or else go to the mountains. The Nawab was insatiable in his curiosity. There was never any lack of subjects for conversation. He would ply Lee with questions. And he would give fervent orations to the little assembly. Religion was often one of these topics. The Nawab was a notorious evil liver. He had passions which he said he simply could not control. There was no secret about it, for his life was

so public there could be no privacy : he was always surrounded by his following. But immoral as he was he yet was keenly interested in religious questions, and like most Asiatics he would speak as freely about religion as we would about politics—and speak openly in public and not merely in private. Religion was a matter of public interest.

“ I do not understand your religion,” he said one day in full durbar to Lee ; “ sometimes I am told that you worship three Gods and sometimes that you worship only one. Which is it ?—three or one ? ”

“ That is a question which I must leave to divines to answer,” said Lee ; “ personally I believe in one God—a God Who is in all and over all. How do we men come into existence ? how does the wheat grow up in the fields ? how does the beauty come into the flowers ? how are the sun and moon and stars kept so regular in their courses ? It can only be because there is some Power working in us and in all about us. And we know that Power must be good, because we can feel it in us urging us to do our best. So we call that Power God, and we try to do what He wants and expects us to do. That is what I believe about God. What do you say, Mulla Sahib ? ”

“ God is great, and we must submit ourselves to His will,” said the Mulla with the reverence Moslems invariably show when they speak of God.

“ The difficulty,” said Lee, “ is to know exactly what is the will of God. We want to do the right thing, but it is not at all easy to know what really is the right thing. We may make serious mistakes while meaning to do right.”

“ For us Moslems rules are laid down in the Koran by our Prophet—may his name be blessed ! ”

“ That is true : but even you Moslems differ among yourselves about the interpretation of texts of

the Koran. Equally good men interpret them in different ways," said Lee.

"Yes, it is very difficult to know what is right," said the Nawab. "Often when I think I have done right, some scowling nobles tell me I have done wrong. And if I do what the Mulla Sahib here thinks right that cross old mulla in Gulistan says it is all wrong, and tells the people God will punish me for having done it. But tell me, Sahib, why don't you Christians accept the Koran? You know we Moslems look upon Moses and Jesus as great prophets, but Mohamed came after them, and, therefore, has a later revelation from God. He supersedes all who have gone before. Why do you keep behindhand and not accept what is latest?"

"Because what is latest is not necessarily best. An older thing may be better than a newer. We think that Christ was a fuller revelation of the will of God than Mohammed. Forgive my saying this. I only said it because you asked me, and I mean no offence."

"I know you don't, Sahib, and I am only asking questions because this interests me so much. Another thing I want to ask is why you believe that the prophet Jesus was born of a virgin. How could a woman bear a child without a man?"

"She cannot. But you know very well, Nawab Sahib, that when some wonderful man appears there always in the course of time spring up marvellous legends about him. And if he is very unusually good the legend grows up, that he could not have been born in the ordinary way like the rest of us. This is really only one way of expressing profound veneration."

"Just one other question, Sahib. Men who come from India tell me that you English do not say prayers regularly like we do. 'They say you have big churches, but you only go to them on Sundays, and only once on Sundays, and numbers of you do not

go even then. And you say no prayers at other times. That is what they tell me."

"That is the case. But we English are very reserved. We do not like praying in public like you do. Often we pretend to be less religious than we really are. And we like to act our religion in our lives rather than pray much in the eyes of everybody."

Lee, in telling me of this conversation, said he found it difficult to make appropriate replies to such very pointed and leading questions asked in public like that, and he was determined not to give his own countrymen away more than he could help. But he said that living in India with Hindus and Moslems had made him realise that Christianity never had sunk into the very marrow of the bone of us Englishmen as Islam and Hinduism had into the Indians. The Founder of Christianity was an Asiatic and lived the life of an Asiatic. His imagery was drawn from Oriental life. And though He was the possession of all mankind and the truths He preached were universal, yet the appeal to us was not quite so direct as the appeal of Mohammed to Indians and frontier men. To Englishmen Christianity was something more "foreign." They did not readily and thoroughly assimilate it. The English are a remote, northern race, very sturdy and independent. They will slowly take in and assimilate and make their own whatever comes from outside that comports with their own nature. But to expect of them that they absorb *en bloc* a religion from outside, as these frontier tribes took on Islam, is to ask of them something contrary to their whole stolid nature. This was Lee's opinion. He thought we English should build up our own religion: it would be Christianity, but our own Christianity. And not till we had made our own Christianity would religion be so evident a part of our lives as it is with Indians. Also he thought that Christianity would spread much more rapidly in India if it could

come, as it were, straight from Palestine instead of round by Greece, Italy and England. The life and sayings of Jesus appealed with tremendous force to Asiatics, and should be given to them pure and direct.

When the autumn came on the Nawab invited Lee to go for a few weeks' tour in Chitas. I was left behind, but Lee and the Nawab set off in great spirits—the latter was like a schoolboy out for a holiday. The weather was perfection. The summer had been hot and in the enclosed valley depressing at times. But now the air was cool and bracing, and every day was fine. And the autumn foliage made the valleys even more beautiful than they were with the blossoms of spring; for the apricot leaves turn into every gorgeous tint, and with the great snow mountains as a background and the deep blue sky above the prospect made one glow with joy in life. The people, too, were in great good humour. They had had a peaceful summer and now were gathering in a bounteous harvest.

The Nawab and Lee used to ride together on the march, and on most days there would be a polo match on arrival in a village. The conversation on the march was usually about shooting and guns and rifles, for the Nawab would be continually passing places where he had had a good day's sport. But often he would come to Lee's tent and spend the evening with him after dinner; and after giving strong hints that he would like some wine or whiskey—hints which Lee refused to see—the conversation would turn to every conceivable subject. In Chitas the topics had been numerous enough. Now in these informal evening talks, with only three or four nobles round, they increased still further in number and range. Neither the Nawab nor his nobles, nor his people, could read or write. There were no books or newspapers to read. All communications from man

to man and all news had to be conveyed by word of mouth. Moreover, they were a child-people, and like all children insatiably curious. Added to all of which, here was an Englishman, a quite strange being from another world. No wonder, therefore, that the questions never ceased ; and the incessant bombardment became a trial at times. But Lee took it as all in the day's work and an excellent means of making his influence felt. He realised that he was not a casual traveller out for a few weeks' pleasure : he was an agent of Government and had a rôle to play.

One thing seemed to be continually puzzling the Nawab : what we did with our Army.

"How many soldiers has the Emperor ?"

"I cannot say exactly," replied Lee, "for he has soldiers all over the world : some in England, some on the way to India, some in Africa, some on the way to China. But in India he has about 220,000 men."

"Why that alone is treble the number of people there are in the whole of Chitas—men, women, and children ! What does he do with them all ? Are they always fighting ?"

"No. Sometimes they are fighting, but generally they are drilling and being made ready to fight when wanted."

"I don't understand. If I had 220,000 soldiers I would use them. I would take Gulistan first, and then I would take Afghanistan. I do not see any good in keeping all that army and not using it."

Then would follow endless questions about the rifles and the guns, and how far they could shoot, and how many men they could kill at a time. And when the Army was disposed of the Navy had to be explained. This was a difficult matter, for not one of Lee's hearers had seen the sea. But illustrated newspapers were a great help, and also gave Lee a little breathing space between questions.

Our system of Government was also eagerly dis-

cussed. The two parties, Conservatives and Liberals, were a puzzle.

" Do you mean to say that England is divided into two parties always opposed to each other? How can the Emperor govern such a country? "

" Because both parties love and honour the Emperor. And the Emperor knows too that if ever England were in danger the two parties would sink their differences and join together like one. You know, Nawab Sahib, that here, too, you have some nobles who hate any change, and like to keep up all the old customs and traditions, while others think Chitas would be all the better for a little change now and then. You have Conservatives and Liberals here, just as we have in England."

When Lee was altogether too tired to go on answering questions, he would suggest to the Nawab that some story-teller should be produced, or some players. He made out that he wanted to be amused and entertained. And so he did, and he used to enjoy the stories, and the plays, and the music, and the dancing. But he had an ulterior object, too: he wanted to increase the interest of the Chitasis in these arts of theirs. They were born story-tellers and listeners to stories. So when he could, without discourtesy, bring the questioning to an end he would ask for a story-teller.

The Chitasis, like most uncivilised people, have great dramatic instinct. Among themselves they are incessantly telling stories to each other. Even after a hard day's work they will sit up far into the night thus indulging themselves. Perhaps originally the story may have some foundation in fact, but their vivid imaginations have long since extended its first boundaries beyond all recognition. A good teller would also accompany his tale with intensely dramatic gestures. His voice would sink down to the very soles of his feet, and he would shrivel himself up to

a little shapeless heap. Or he would spring up with arms extended and eyes almost shooting out of his head, and in a terrific tone make some tremendous climax. And the listeners were splendid audiences. Not one among them was blasé or bored. Like children they glued their attention on to the teller. They shrivelled with fear and horror, just as he did. Their eyes flared with excitement, just as his did. They worked him up, just as much as he worked them up. And the more blood-curdling both parties could make a story the better they were pleased. Most of the stories were of events which the teller genuinely believed had actually happened, and of persons who had really existed. Even the fairy stories were supposed to be tales of fact. But pure imagination was also exercised, and wonderful stories were produced from the fertile inner consciousness of the teller. And the one salient feature of them all, whether of fact or of fancy, was horrible slaughter. Perhaps those who have ever told stories to children will remember the fiendish glee with which they listen to the tale of good and highly respectable people being gobbled up by bears or wolves. No story is worth telling which has not in it some amount of horror, something to make the blood run cold.

In some of the larger valleys it was possible to get up dramatic performances. The villagers would dress themselves up and act some well-known story. A *shikar* story was very popular, the story of some noble shooting markhor. Some of the villagers would impersonate the wild goats grazing on the mountain side, while other characters would be the noble and his *shikari* and attendants. Other plays would be of fights with neighbouring tribes. All were acted with great dramatic force—and often with a little subtle chaff.

Besides this story-telling and play-acting, singing, dancing, and sitar-playing were employed to guile

away the evenings. Honestly, Lee did not care for these so much as the story-telling and dramas. Boys, as good-looking girls, would dance on the grass outside the tent by the light of the fire, and would sing tender love songs, but the dancing was not very graceful, nor the songs very melodious. Lee sat them out though, like a man, and distributed liberal largesse to performers of every kind. And to a few who were specially good he gave robes of honour. He also discussed with the musicians the quality and make of their instruments, and promised to get some up from India.

Both the Nawab and the people liked all this, and he got further and further into their life, and attached himself to them.

CHAPTER XXVI

GATHERING CLOUDS

LATE in October, the Nawab and Lee returned to Chitas. They had had a good holiday together and became very intimate with one another. Lee had got to know the people of all classes, and they to know him. He had done his best to keep them together, and centred on their Chief. He had tried to interest himself in what interested them. And he had done what he could to make them take a pride in themselves and in their country.

But now they were back in Chitas, both the Nawab and Lee felt the holiday was over, and disagreeable facts of life would have to be faced. There was the ever-recurring trouble from the Gulistan direction, which seemed to be brewing up again. And there was the perpetual presence of his rival brother. Do what Lee could he never was able to make the Nawab treat his brother with even passable politeness. He lived in constant fear of the youth. Always his guards were on the look out. And yet he treated the youngman with studied neglect. Outwardly he seemed to ignore his presence, and never spoke to him. And in the scowl on Bahadur Khan's face, Lee could see the anger and longing for revenge which was boiling within him. The two were, in fact, thoroughly on each other's nerves. And once again the Nawab spoke to Lee on the subject.

"I cannot stand him any longer," he said; "he

means to kill me, and you must let me kill him, Sahib."

"No. I can't do that," said Lee. "You must accept him as he is. Give him employment. Give him something to occupy his mind. Don't keep him hanging about here with nothing to do except nourish grievances."

"I could not trust him in any position. He would always be working against me. And he is safer here under my eye than away at a distance. But I warn you, Sahib, that if you won't let me kill him, he will kill me."

The prospect was not bright, and with the winter coming on and the sun only appearing from about ten in the morning to three in the afternoon, above the mountain ridges, Lee knew gloom would again settle on the people and their Chief. And the Nawab was no strong and courageous ruler who would face trouble with a stout heart. He was a delightful companion when all was going well; but there was no grit in him, and no solid bottom to his character. Sensuality had eaten into him; and he had nothing to go on.

The hope of the country was the Wazir. He was a tower of strength, and a wonder of patience and diplomacy. Though he could not read or write, he retained the facts of every case accurately in his memory. He knew every one of importance in the country, and knew all about him. He was a perfect judge of character. No one and nothing could ever perturb him. A natural wisdom flowed constantly from him. And he could put a case with an eloquence and a force which any British Prime Minister might envy. It was a delight to observe him. But Lee had to be very circumspect in his attitude towards this Wazir. He had to be careful not to let the Nawab think that he wished to ignore him, and deal direct with the more capable and sensible Wazir. Lee, indeed, knew full well that it would be the height of folly to belittle the Chief

himself, in his own eyes or in the eyes of his people. He would therefore constantly address himself to the Nawab, and not to the Wazir. But he was very careful also to make an opportunity for the Wazir to deliver himself, so that he and every one else might know what the Wazir's views were.

Another source of strength were the levies. And now the men were free from field work, Lee and I could do more with them. But here again Lee was almost over-punctilious about working through the Nawab and the Wazir and the levy-leader. He wanted to avoid the faintest suspicion that we were turning them into Government troops.

With as little ostentation as possible he saw that the levies were steadily drilled and kept ready for immediate emergency. He had obtained some old Government rifles for them and a fairly good supply of ammunition. And I saw to it that the rifles were kept clean and in order, and in safe custody. Fortunately Ali Shah, the levy-leader, was a splendid fellow, very handsome and athletic, a first-rate polo player, and a good shot. But one day Lee got the Nawab and the Wazir and the usual following to come down and see the levies drilling, and then, after first asking the Nawab's permission, spoke out very straight to Ali Shah.

"You must understand," Lee said, "that this is no game or sham that you are working at. It is real serious business. In a country like Chitas a sudden attack may come and you have to be prepared to meet it on the instant. The slower you are at the start the more you will suffer afterwards. You know how alert the markhor are on the mountains—always fit and always watchful. Be like them. Only when danger comes don't run away, like they do. Join together, put your heads down, and butt at the enemy."

"That's right, Sahib," said the Nawab, "those

silly markhor bolt off at the very smell of a leopard. But they have great strong horns which they can use right enough on themselves. If three or four of them were to combine and go for the leopard they would soon send him to the right-about.”

“ Yes, and that is how the levies must act. And they must look to Ali Shah for the lead, so that they may all act together. There is no sense in first one markhor butting at a leopard and then another. They must all attack at the same moment. In the meantime, while there is no leopard near, they can be grazing about, feeding. Only they must keep themselves perpetually fit and ready, and prepared to act together when the danger suddenly appears.

“ And remember, Ali Shah,” continued Lee, “ you must always look to the Nawab Sahib. It is because Barkley Sahib and I know more about military matters that we train you. But you are the servant of the Nawab Sahib. You eat his salt, and you must be loyal to him and do what he orders. All I ask of you is this—that when the test comes you prove yourselves a credit to our training. I don’t want the Nawab Sahib to turn to me afterwards and tell me that all this training was useless. I want him to be able to come to Barkley Sahib and me and say that if it had not been for our training he would never have been able to defeat his enemy. So be loyal to the Nawab Sahib, and a credit to us.”

“ Very well, Sahib. You must train us like you train your polo ponies. But Nawab Sahib will ride us. And if we win the game he will thank you for having trained us so well, and we will thank you, too.”

“ And you will remember, Nawab Sahib,” said Lee, “ that I am interested in getting your levies trained well because the stronger and more secure you are on the frontier the better it will suit the interest of Government. What we want is peace and order here, and we want to help you to keep order for yourselves.”

Having said this much Lee left the details of the training to me, and I worked away hard at it, because I could see that Lee expected they might soon be required.

While he was absorbed in these matters a sudden blow fell on Lee. In November came the news of Ronnie Mostyn's death from enteric, while on active service somewhere up the Nile. The news had made a stir in England, and been announced by the papers in flaring headlines, for Ronnie was a national hero on account of his racing triumphs.

Lee was deeply affected. "I don't know any man I admire more than I do poor dear old Ronnie," he said to me; "he was of the very best—a whole head above the rest. It's rotten to think of all his pluck and nerve being snuffed out by a go of enteric. He'd have been a great soldier one day. It's that 'wasting' that's done it, I expect. It must have sapped his constitution. Continually reducing his weight must have played old Harry with him. But as long as he won the race he didn't care what harm he did himself.

"What was so marvellous about him was his way of carrying people with him. You couldn't resist him. What he wanted he wanted so desperately you hadn't the heart to refuse. He was like a child—and as hard to resist. And if *you* wanted anything, there was nothing Ronnie would stick at to do it for you. He was always ready to do a good turn. And he was the best hand at making friends I know, and the most wonderful friend himself. He chose such good fellows, and made so much of those he cared for, anyone was proud to be his friend.

"He was, indeed, about the best Christian I know—barring my old father. He never turned the other cheek. He always hit back hard. But there was such a smile behind his blows that he used to turn his very

enemy into a friend. How he did it, I don't know. But here it is : at the end of his life he has a host of friends and not one enemy. And as long as friends are made it doesn't matter twopence whether they're made by turning the cheek or hitting them hard. There's no particular virtue in one method rather than the other. The friendship's the main thing.

“Well, he's gone, poor old chap. But I know this much, if ever I'm in a tight place up here I'll think of him and try to do as he would. So the enteric won't have the last word, after all. His gallant spirit will still be working its way.”

The same paper that brought news of Ronnie's death had also a picture of Lady Meara at some society function. In a rush came flooding in sweet memories of her also. For the time being he could think of nothing else but these two. He could not get on with his work, and had to go away by himself. So he went off into the mountains.

And there a great, great sadness came on him—and unutterable loneliness. Only one could share his very highest ambitions and she only at a distance. Always in his deepest soul he would have to be by himself. And yet what he was making for, from the depth of his soul upward, was, he believed, and anyhow meant to be, for the real good of men. He did mean it to be for the good of his country. He meant that with his whole heart. And he had tried to keep his head clear and his judgment sound, so that what he believed to be for his country's good indubitably was. And yet all these deep yearnings he had to keep to himself. It went against the grain with him to talk about them to a single person round him. Certainly to me he never breathed a word. I could only guess there were deep things going on within him. Sure friend as he was, I always felt there was a reserve into which I could never penetrate.

For the first day and night in the mountains this

poignant sadness fell on him. He thought of poor Ronnie's life, almost thrown away, if any life lost in the service of England can be looked upon in that light. And sweet sad thoughts of Lady Meara came welling up within him. And he thought, too, of how much there was he meant to do—what great things he had intended—and how little impression he could make. He seemed such a tiny mite struggling in so vast a sea. His aims were so high, but his efforts so puny. At the most, how little he could effect.

But, as he wandered about the mountains in the glorious sunshine, his own true self came up again. He thought of Ronnie's pluck and never-failing cheeriness. He thought of his dear mother's sweet serenity and of his old father's quiet calm assurance. He determined to make the most and the best of the position he was in. That at least he could do. And that he must do. The rest was not in his hands. After all God had *His* part, too, to play, and we might be sure that He would play it. And with this thought his spirit revived within him.

He knew a hard time was coming, and he had no confidence in his immediate superior—for confidence once lost to Lee was lost for ever! He would trust any man till he proved he could not be trusted, and then he would never trust him again. But he had great confidence in the Government of India, and especially in the Foreign Secretary. And above all he had the greatest faith in England. He was far away on the remotest confines of the Empire, and more than two hundred miles from the nearest telegraph office. When trouble came he would have to act on his own responsibility. But he had an immense faith in himself. And he had a conviction sure and positive that his country would support him.

And soon enough trouble seethed and boiled. The bellicose Nawab of Gulistan summoned up his levies, no one knew for what purpose. His fanatical chief

mulla again began to breathe out hatred against the heretic Christians whose presence contaminated the life of all true Moslems. Our Nawab suspected his brother of secretly communicating with the Nawab of Gulistan to gain his support. There were the makings of infinite trouble. And Lee's first care was to get immediate and reliable information of what was occurring—though this point there was no need to press upon the Nawab and Wazir. But Lee did see to it that the Wazir's recommendations were well supported by the Nawab, and he gave them money to aid them in procuring the all-important news. At the same time he took infinite pains to influence the turn of affairs in a peaceful direction.

He would like to have made a visit to the Nawab of Gulistan, but this was out of the question. The Nawab would not admit him to his country. Lee's only other course was to see men who came from there and would be returning. He got the Chitas Nawab to send to him any who thus came into his country, and he received them civilly, gave them tea and refreshments, and then spoke to them quite frankly about the situation—repeating what he had often said before, that Government had no quarrel whatever with Gulistan as long as the Chief was not aggressive. If he did not want to have a British officer, we did not want to force one on him. And we would certainly not countenance or allow any attack on him by the Nawab of Chitas. On the other hand, if he attacked Chitas we would help the Chitasis to defend their country. In ways like this he tried to get his attitude towards Gulistan known. And the other element of trouble, the Nawab's brother, Bahadur Khan, he sought to eliminate by more direct means. With the Nawab's permission he invited him to a private interview, and he then had a heart to heart talk with the youth.

“ I know very well,” he said to Bahadur Khan,

“that you and the Nawab Sahib are not on friendly terms, and I want, if I can, to make peace between you. We are here, quite alone, and what you say I will tell no one. Do tell me what it is that is troubling you.”

“Sahib, I will speak the truth. The Nawab hates me. He never speaks to me. He scowls at me all day. How can I be friends with him ? ”

“You can be friends with me, anyhow. I don’t scowl at you. And I want to put an end to this perpetual suspicion of one another. You might be two children. Now I can assure you of this, that the Nawab means you no harm. I have talked to him of it, and have got his assurance. And as to the scowls, you are a grown-up man now, and must put up with them.”

“The Nawab Sahib may tell you he means me no harm, but I am sure he does,” said Bahadur Khan, “or why should he always be so angry. Some day he may lose control of himself and kill me. He may not mean it now, but he may do it all the same. And if he does not mean it himself others may mean it for him.”

“That may be so, I admit,” said Lee ; “but as far as *you* are concerned, I ask you not to say a word or do a thing which will increase the tension between you and the Nawab Sahib. And I must warn you very clearly that he is the friend of Government and my friend, and that I shall be very angry if anything is done against him.”

Lee hoped that this talk might do some good. But Chitasis are such impulsive people he could never tell what they might do on the spur of the moment or under grave temptation. They might mean quite well, but be carried away. Murder was no heinous crime with them. It was the ordinary method of settling disputes. They would much more readily murder an opponent than we would knock a man down. Blows are exchanged even in the House of Commons. In Chitas those blows would be murders.

In most Royal families there are jealousies and sharp passages at arms. In Chitas those feuds were settled with the gun or the dagger.

Lee now received a long grave letter from Mr. Donald, warning him very seriously that an explosion might occur at any time, and that he must be more circumspect than ever, and let the Nawab take no liberties with him. He reiterated his distrust of the Chitasis, and he believed that conspiracies against the Nawab were being secretly concocted. He was very suspicious also of the Nawab of Gulistan. Mr. Donald thought he was fomenting internal trouble in Chitas, and would take advantage of it for his own ends. Lee was instructed to see that the house and grounds in which he lived were kept in a proper state for defence, and ample supplies always maintained. If trouble came, Lee would be in a strong position in this house and could let the enemy beat their heads against it. He could hold out where he was till the rising subsided or relief came.

“ I agree with Mr. Donald,” said Lee, as he finished reading the letter to me, “ that we have to be on the look out. Conspiracies probably are brewing. They are the counterpart of the brewings up for a General Election with us. If they come to a head and the Chitasis become really naughty we shall have to give them a sharp reminder that they must behave themselves. But we need not therefore imagine that they are any more inherently wicked than the rest of mankind. We must be on our guard for outbursts of temper. But it’s a mistake to distrust them to the point of disliking them. They’re a perfectly likeable people, and I like them.

“ And as to sitting tight in this old house and letting them ram their heads against it while I waited inside twiddling my thumbs till reinforcements arrived, I should like to see myself at that game ! Good heavens ! if I did any such thing the whole country

would get up, and the reinforcements never *would* arrive—unless they were a whole army. I've not the slightest intention of playing a passive rôle like that. I hope I've more of the Ronnie Mostyn in me than merely to sit tight. I don't hold with remaining impassive and letting a rising develop all round me. I believe in going out and hitting it hard before it comes to a head."

The next few weeks were full of rumours, and the usual winter gloom settled heavily on the Chitasis. But one day Lee thought he saw a chance of easing the situation, and he seized it like lightning. An influential man from Gulistan had been sent by the Wazir to come and see him, and as they were talking he mentioned that one of the Nawab of Gulistan's chief advisers—a certain Mustapha Khan—was at his native village very close to the Chitasi borders, and only thirty miles from Chitas itself. Lee determined there and then, without any warning, to go off and see this man. Unescorted and unarmed he would suddenly appear there and have a talk with Mustapha Khan, and personally explain the whole situation to him and get him to use his influence with the Nawab of Gulistan to prevent trouble arising. I warned Lee that this was a very risky thing to do. Englishmen were never allowed inside the Gulistan borders, and the Gulistanis were a more fanatical lot than the Chitasis, and might very possibly shoot him, or at least make him prisoner, and this might be very awkward for Government. Lee only replied :

"It's very good of you, old chap, to tell me your mind. But mine is set now, and I mean to go through with it. I know it's risky. But I don't mind what risk I take, if only I can settle things up and prevent a row. Fellows take risks hunting and racing and big game shooting, and we must take risks in this frontier work. And Government must take risks, too. The Empire cannot be run like a tea-party. And I take

the risk because, mind you, if *they* start the row it will be no kid glove affair, as far as I'm concerned. Once the row is begun I shall hit hard and with all my might, so that they will think twice, and a good many more times than twice, before they start a rumpus again."

With this he rode off, accompanied by the man from Gulistan. It was a venturesome undertaking. I could not call it foolhardy, for Lee was too sensible to do anything actually foolish; but it was running pretty near in that direction; and I was full of anxiety all the day. I could not expect him back till well after dark, and I sent a couple of ponies down the road for him, so that he might ride through as rapidly as possible. But when ten o'clock struck and still he had not arrived, I began to fear the worst and to think of the terrible responsibility which would now fall on me. And I was only deterred from going to meet him by the feeling that I must keep at headquarters to take action if anything serious had happened. At last I heard the sound of horse's hoofs, and looking out there was Lee himself and full of spirits.

"A pretty close shave I had," he said, "and at one time I thought it was all U.P. They were as stiff as a board, and I got nothing done. All the same I'm glad I went. I've got the hang of things better, and know the class of man I have to deal with. I've made a big bid for peace. Perhaps the last I shall be able to make. If after that they break out they must suffer the consequences. It will be their fault not mine. The devil of it is they have war in their hearts. They don't care for peace. They want war. It's the breath of their nostrils to them. That is the real trouble. And it was worth going there to find that out."

When Lee had settled down to supper he told me more in detail what had happened.

“I can’t help laughing now, but it was serious enough at the time,” he said. “I rode straight through to Pailgam, the first village in Gulistan territory, and the village where Mustapha Khan was staying. A few villagers were hanging about, and I told one of them to go and tell Mustapha Khan that Lee Sahib from Chitas had come, and wanted to have a talk with him. I was then taken to a house in the middle of the village, and up some stairs to a good-sized room where Mustapha Khan and a number of cut-throats were assembled. He received me quite civilly, and we sat on a carpet together. I said I had come over in this informal way, because I had only just heard that he was here and I wanted to take advantage of his presence to have a frank private talk with him that he might let the Nawab of Gulistan know what my views were. He immediately began to shy, saying he could not possibly have any official dealings with me : the Nawab would be angry at hearing that I had ever been in his country. I said I quite realised that, but matters were serious and no harm on earth could be done by just listening to me. He need make no reply. He need only hear what I had to say.

“Mustapha Khan quieted down a bit then, and I told him the old story that you have often heard me tell these people, that Government only wanted peace and order on this frontier, that we did not wish to interfere with Gulistan if they would leave Chitas alone, but that the Nawab of Chitas was now under the protection of Government, and if Gulistanis attacked him we should have to protect him. I did not mean to say this in any threatening way, but I did want to give a serious warning in this informal manner ; and they might see from my having come amongst them unarmed and unescorted that I was endeavouring to keep the peace between them.

“At the end of my harangue Mustapha Khan said

he had nothing to say : he could not have any dealing with me. I urged that anyhow he might tell the Nawab what I had said. He replied that he could not promise even that. ‘ Very well then,’ I said, ‘ I must return to Chitas, but you will understand that I have meant nothing but friendliness in coming here.’

“ Mustapha Khan himself remained civil enough, but as soon as I rose to go a mulla at the end of the room blazed out at me in a perfect fury. We English were Kaffirs and unbelievers. We defiled good Moslems, and ought to be blasted off the face of the earth. The whole tone of the meeting suddenly changed. There was a fearful suppressed excitement. And I knew that if I got the least excited myself that would be the end of things. Luckily I managed to keep cool. I had a feeling that these people wouldn’t have the nerve to lay hands on me in cold blood if I didn’t excite them. I was unarmed, and I was an Englishman. They might hate me a lot. But it was another matter actually to seize an officer of Government. So I managed to work up a smile, and said that as they did not seem to like me I had not the least wish to force myself upon them. I was quite happy where I was in Chitas, and the sooner I got back there the better for them and for me. At the same time I began shaking hands as cheerily as I could with Mustapha Khan, and moved slowly towards the door. As I had surmised, they had not the nerve to tackle me ; and I managed to get away. But I ran it pretty fine, and am precious glad to be back here all right.”

“ Yes, you had a narrow squeak of it ; and I wonder you pulled it off,” I said. “ You wouldn’t if you had not kept as cool as you did.”

“ That’s what did it,” Lee replied ; “ but I’m thundering glad I went. When I’m strung up like that, and when the people about me are strung up

too, I can feel what is in the bottom of their hearts. It isn't so much from what they say as from what they exhale invisibly and inaudibly. That they hated us English was evident enough. But there was a good deal more. I could feel they were spoiling for a row. As I said before, war is in their hearts. We shall have a burst up to a dead certainty. And it was worth going over there to find that out. Now we know what to look for."

The next day Lee visited the Nawab and told him the results of his talk with Mustapha Khan, and warned the Nawab to be on his guard. But the Nawab was in an extraordinarily careless mood. He was more concerned with his own personal enjoyment than with State affairs. He said he had heard of some markhor having been driven down from the heights by the snow and he was going after them. He and Bahadur Khan[•] were going together. This was evidently that he might keep an eye on his brother. •

CHAPTER XXVII

STORM

THE two brothers accordingly went off together to shoot markhor. But a couple of days later a man galloped up to our house with his eyes starting out of his head in wild excitement.

"The Nawab Sahib is killed. The Nawab Sahib is killed," he kept on shouting. He was brought in to Lee, and when he had quieted down he told his story. While the Nawab was aiming at a markhor one of Bahadur Khan's men had deliberately shot at the Nawab and killed him there and then. Bahadur Khan had then said that he was now Nawab, and was riding in towards Chitas.

"The fat is fairly in the fire now," said Lee to me, "and we shall have to keep our eyes skinned. Warn all your Sikhs to keep here and not to go out, and have everything ready for any emergency. I'll find out from the Wazir if there is any confirmation of this story."

He was perfectly cool. But I noticed that from now onwards his mind worked with amazing swiftness. His ideas came with racing speed. He was measured and collected in his speech: there was never any haste or flurry. But I was astounded to see how direct and quick he was, and how each word and act exactly fitted the occasion. He reminded me of an Arab horse which is lazy and stumbling at a walk or a trot, but which as soon as it is put at a

gallop is full of fire and life. And, like the Arab, Lee seemed to enjoy being put at top speed.

Presently the Wazir himself appeared and reported that it was perfectly true. Lee said that in that case he would be glad if both the Wazir and Bahadur Khan would come and see him directly the latter arrived in Chitas.

The next morning they both came. Lee asked for an account of what happened. Bahadur Khan made no pretence about it.

"My brother always hated me," he said, "and I am quite certain meant to shoot me this time if I had not shot him first. So I had him shot. And now I am Nawab."

"Whether you are Nawab or not will depend upon what the Viceroy says," replied Lee, very severely; "but I may tell you quite straight that *I* will not recognise you as Nawab, nor recommend the Viceroy to recognise you. You have done a stupid, dastardly deed. In England you would be hanged for it. I will have nothing whatever to do with you after this. The Nawab was a friend of Government and a friend of mine. And an enemy of his is an enemy of mine."

The young man was astounded, and he completely crumpled up. He had always seen Lee kindly and smiling, and he had no idea he could be so stern. He went out crestfallen—an abject spectacle.

Lee then had a grave talk with the Wazir.

"I have no power formally to recognise anyone as Nawab," Lee said. "I must await the orders of the Viceroy. His Excellency may recognise Bahadur Khan, or he may recognise that little brother of his, Rab Nawaz. I cannot say. But this much I can say for certain: that I will not recommend the recognition of Bahadur Khan; and if His Excellency sees fit to recognise him I will withdraw from here in favour of some other officer. Unless His Excellency specifically orders me, I will have no truck whatever

with the murderer of a friend of mine. So you know my own personal point of view. Only you must keep it strictly to yourself. And now you and I will have to manage State affairs until the orders of the Viceroy arrive. But one thing you must make absolutely clear to everyone. There will be a Nawab. We are not going to take Chitas and govern it ourselves. For the time being I may have to control affairs ; but only till I get the orders of Government as to whom I shall recognise as Nawab. In the meantime, you had better get as many of the leading nobles as are here to come and see me this afternoon. Also tell the levies they are to take no orders except they come through you. We must not have the rulership of Chitas settled by a bullet in this off-hand way any longer.”

“ I shall have great difficulty,” said the Wazir, “ for Bahadur Khan has a certain following. He is the elder surviving brother. And in this country the people do not hold the killing of a brother is such a crime as you British think it. And if you assume control they will think you mean to seize the country, whatever you may say.”

“ I can't help that,” said Lee ; “ it's the only thing to be done. If one Nawab after another is to be shot by his nearest relation we shall never have peace here. And they have seen me long enough to know that when I say a thing I mean it. I say quite decidedly that the British Government have no intention whatever of annexing Chitas. If anyone disbelieves me, he will act against me at his peril. I warn him. We *must* have a firm, clear, straight line and follow it resolutely till the Viceroy's orders are received. I know your difficulties, and I have plenty of my own. But if you and I pull together and go straight ahead the rest will soon come tumbling in after us. The main thing is to give a line.”

In the afternoon the Wazir and a number of the

nobles came to Lee and he spoke to them in the same strain. His frankness and firmness impressed them considerably. But Lee was too wise to flatter himself that he was out of the wood yet. There was still the Nawab of Gulistan to reckon with. The Bahadur Khan faction would certainly look to him to support them. Equally certainly the Gulistan people would seize the opportunity to get a footing in Chitas. They would raise the cry that the Kaffirs—the hated Christians—were seizing Chitas and would eventually seize Gulistan; a holy war must be preached against them, and they must be cleared out of this frontier root and branch. This is what Lee knew would happen.

And sure enough two days afterwards came certain news that Mustapha Khan was collecting a force on the frontier. Its destination could only be Chitas. Lee, therefore, began his counter move. He had avoided everything which would actually provoke a conflict. But he was not going to be caught napping. With the Wazir and Ali Shah, the levy leader, and myself, he arranged his plan. Secretly by night and in disguise the fifty Sikhs were to be moved down towards the frontier and hidden up a side nullah during the day. The levies likewise were to move down, going along the hills out of sight. All communication to and from Gulistan was to be absolutely stopped. And Lee and I, dressed for the time being in loose Chitasi robes and caps, were to go down to the furthest Chitasi village.

“We must wait,” he said to the Wazir, “until the Nawab of Gulistan puts his head out. But directly his men are an inch over the border we must fall upon them and smash them to atoms. We mustn’t let this get to a head. We must show both our friends and our enemies that we are prepared to act—and to act sharp and strong. Our friends will then soon gather round us. It is not yet the moment

to make a general call for men. But we must be ready to send out the call the instant we hear the Gulistanis are actually on the move."

As soon as it was dark Lee and I put on Chitasi cloaks over our service kit, and by threes and fours by different routes the Sikhs were led out of Chitas. When we were clear of the place we assembled on the main route—only a bridle path—and marched through the night. By dawn we halted in a side nullah well out of sight. We all had a good meal, and then slept for most of the day. The next night we made another march, and by dawn on the following morning had reached the actual frontier.

Redoubled caution was now necessary, so that the Gulistanis should not have an inkling of our presence. The Sikhs were hidden behind rocks. And after a meal and some sleep Lee and I proceeded to prospect the situation. From a height we could look right down into Gulistan territory, and with our glasses see the people assembling. We had not come a day too soon.

The frontier was a side stream flowing into the Chitas River. After crossing this the Gulistanis would for half a mile have to pass along a narrow path between cliffs on the one side and the river on the other. Then they would debouch on to a fairly open plain. And Lee meant to pounce upon them as they came out on to this plain. The most reliable levy scouts were placed on the look out with magnesium wire to burn by night, and flags to wave by day to signal the enemy movements. The Sikhs were placed in readiness behind a wall on the plain. And the levies were assembled well up on the mountain side.

Information we received showed that the enemy, as we could now call them, were going to advance on the morrow. There had been a great tom-toming and much haranguing by the mullas, who were

working the people up to a holy war against the British. Lee knew that the moment was come. But the nearer the danger approached the cooler he became.

"I've not sought this trouble," he said; "I've done my best to keep the peace. I'm not fighting for fighting's sake. But we've to look ahead. We must make for what is best in the long run. Peace does not come by shirking. We have to create it. And we mustn't mind both giving and suffering pain in the process. God doesn't shrink from using even death to make a fuller life. We must stick to our friends, but fight our enemies. It's the only way with these wild people. And to-morrow I mean to strike so hard that we shall never need to strike again. It's what Ronnie would have done, and I shall do as he would. The Gulistanis are asking for a fight. I'll give them their bellyful. They'll have such a fight as they'll remember to the end of their days—and their children after them. There'll be no mistake about it.

"But mind you, Barkley, we're running nasty risks in fighting. Things may turn out pretty bad for us. You and I are the only Englishmen here. Even of your Sikhs there are only fifty. And Heaven knows what these Chitasi levies may do when they're up against Gulistanis. They may run like hares. It's a big risk, but we must take it. Unless we do we shall never have peace on this frontier."

Lee was well enough aware of the dangers before him, and he went into them in no rash, unthinking way. He knew well that without sacrifice no great end can be achieved, and he was fully prepared to make even the supreme.

Early the next morning came the news that the Gulistanis were actually crossing the frontier stream. And Lee was instantly in swiftest action.

"Send out the signal to call up the general levy at once. Let the men from the near villages rally on

your Sikhs, Barkley. And I'll go up with the levies. Now we'll see what all your training's worth. We shall fairly have these Gulistanis. Good-bye, old boy. The best of luck to you."

He was as cool as a cucumber and in the highest spirits. Action suited him. From the moment the news arrived he became a different man. His whole face lighted up. His thoughts moved like lightning. His words rang clear. His action was instant. Climbing rapidly up the mountain side he reached a point where he could view the whole scene. He kept the levies in restraint till the enemy had crossed the stream and had come along the path by the cliffs and were negligently debouching in the plain in total ignorance of the danger near. Then he sent up the signal to attack.

My Sikhs immediately opened fire, and sent volley after volley into the startled enemy. And before the Gulistanis could get themselves together we charged with the bayonet; and villagers who had collected joined in with us yelling and brandishing weapons of every kind. Lee and his levies at the same time swooped like eagles upon them in rear. They were cut to ribbons. And leaving them to the general levies, now pouring in from behind, Lee and I, with the Sikhs and the trained levies, pursued those who were trying to make their way back to Gulistan.

"Keep them on the run," he shouted, "keep on at 'em. They're all jumbling up together, those who are flying back and those who are coming forward. We must get in among them and smash them to pieces."

He charged along ahead with the levies quicker than my Sikhs could go. I could see him cross the river, and with his revolver dash right in amongst the Gulistanis, fighting them man to man; and the levies with him. And then, to my horror, I saw a huge Gulistani cut him a tremendous blow on the

head, and poor Lee fell like a stone to the ground. The Gulistani was himself immediately cut down by the levies. But Lee could not rise, and there was a half halt while the levies collected round him. But I could see him vehemently protesting and urging them on.

I made my way as fast as I could to him, and found him fearfully knocked about. But his mind was still clear, and with all his energy he said :

“Take command, old chap. And keep it up. Let ’em have it up to the hilt. Give it them to the last ounce.”

I left a good Sikh with him and went on with my men. We utterly broke up the whole gathering. Numbers were killed, and the few survivors scattered all over the country. And when I was quite satisfied that nothing more could be done I returned to where Lee lay. They had placed him under the shade of a tree and propped him up against it. His face beamed as he saw me—beamed with deep relief and thankfulness. He had evidently been longing for a word with me before the end.

“Dear old chap, it is good to see you again,” he said. “I expect I’m done for. But we’ve pulled it off all right, and it’s worth it. There’ll be no rising now. We have nipped that right enough.”

“We have, indeed,” I said. “We’ve saved the situation, and you’re perfectly splendid. It was all due to you. But you must keep quiet now.”

He kept silent for a little for he was in fearful agony ; and then he made a great effort to pull himself together for what he evidently knew would be his final words. He spoke very slowly, each word coming out by itself.

“Keep up our work, Barkley. Don’t let it go. Carry it on.”

This is what he had tremendously in mind. He hated the thought of his life being given in vain.

“Indeed, we will,” I replied. “We’ll always remember you and how keen you were upon it.”

Once this was off his mind he seemed easier and the pain seemed easier too. After a time he said :

“I don’t mind dying now. I feel at peace. The men stood by me magnificently. You and your Sikhs and the Chitasis were splendid. Such good fellows they all are. Look after them well.”

He said no more, but I could see him looking at his beloved mountains and at the blue sky and at his faithful men, and he seemed to be taking farewell of it all. Then a heavenly expression came over his face—the most beautiful thing I have ever seen. All pain had gone ; and he passed away, at peace with himself and with all the world.

It was agony for me, and I could keep myself in no longer. And the Sikhs and Chitasis were like me : the tears streamed down their faces. Lee was to them almost a god.

It was agony to me ; and I knew what it would be to his dear old father and his sister and many another. But for *him*—how could we wish anything better ! What nobler death could any die ! There in the open air, in the sunshine, in the midst of the mountains, with his faithful men around him, and with his heart’s work done.

I have heard men say : Out of darkness we came and into darkness we go. But who could ever speak such words of Evan Lee ? Out of love he came and into a greater love he went. He was made up of love himself, and he enriched love all his life. And at the end, as his farewell look told, he could feel himself surrounded by love and sinking back into her arms, to be embraced by them for ever.

CHAPTER XXVIII

FOR EVERMORE

THE day after the fight we buried Evan Lee in the very surroundings amid which he would have most liked to remain. Precipitous mountains of implacable granite, such as he loved to pit himself against, arose on every side. But they culminated in those pure snow summits towards which his soul so constantly aspired. And close around were the sunny fields and shady groves and the cheery people among whom his life's best work was planned.

Here it was we laid him—laid him not to rest, for who could ever think of Lee and rest together, but in full assurance that his brave spirit would now work its way in the souls of men as but for the manner of his death it might never otherwise have done.

As I read the words of the Burial Service over his grave I felt a tone come into my voice that I had never known before. I caught something of the awe in the presence of death which man has ever felt and which must have been in the mind of him who wrote those moving verses. But that was not all. In the sunshine, in the presence of those Himalayan peaks, and with the spirit of Evan Lee penetrating through me, sadness itself had a note of victory in it. Lee was not dead: he was more triumphantly alive than ever before. In the very act of death his entire life seemed focused to a needle-point, and to have a piercing power it had not till now possessed. The

essence of its nature was revealed as clear as a snowy peak against the azure. What he had worked for he would now in losing his life accomplish. More effectively far than if he had lived would his life achieve its purpose.

And as the final note of the sad “Last Post ” echoed away among the mountains I felt I was hearing the very heart-beat of Lee’s soul. The echoes soared higher and higher till they were lost to human ear among the snowy summits. And the last most delicate note which reached me was one of untellable sweetness. Everything else was gone. Sweetness only remained.

Wild flowers he had always preferred, and I planted some on his grave. As out of the rude earth and unprotected they create for themselves their own dainty blossoms so, in the rough of life and in no sheltered and tended garden, had he worked out his manhood—tender, true, and hardy as they. Both he and they sprang from the same mysterious Source of all that is most lovely, and in his death they were not divided. For ever would wild flowers grow on his grave.

Often in his letters I see the hope expressed that his name may be remembered and his life work endure. His father’s parting wish he had endeavoured to fulfil. To make the best of himself and of every situation had always been his aim. And he had earnestly longed that those who were best fitted to appreciate his work would be honestly able to accord him their praise.

These hopes have in part been fulfilled. As the result of the fight peace was established and has remained ever since. The name of Lee is revered on

the frontier. And there must be many besides myself who have in times of crisis turned to him for inspiration. So his soul still lives—lives where souls live for ever—in the souls of others. With theirs it goes to form the soul of England.

But more still I hope for my comrade. May the way he won through in his small world help others to win through in theirs, be theirs less or greater than his. The joy which he had found in his life may they also find in theirs. And what they find may they pass on unabated. Then his soul will more than live: because of him England will give birth to others of his kind—but better, as he himself would have wished; and what he did for England will live and grow for evermore.

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